Lifestyle / E4
Vintage Chinese cuisine goes modern

■ Metro / A23
MacArthur Highway widening project to start in May

■ Sports / A25
Pacquiao easy sparring target

■ Across / A17
Sulu war resumes

■ BYLINE INQUIRER
Pagudpud for 4, for under P8,000. Biyahe na!
Ngayong alas-10.30 n.g. sa ABC

Erap's son angry RP not No. 1 on graft list

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

AT LEAST one government official is incensed that the Philippines did not bag the top slot in a list of the most corrupt countries in Asia.

According to San Juan

ERAP'S/ A9

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

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Thursday, March 10, 2005 ★★ 60 pages / 6 sections / Vol. 20 / No.

SCHOOL TRAGEDY IN MABINI

28 Bohol pupils die of poisoning

Fried cassava also downs 60 others

By Chito A. Fuentes and Jhunnex Napallacan
PDI Visayas Bureau

TAGBILARAN CITY—When 8-year-old Judy Ann Bosbos left home early yesterday morning, there was no indication that it would be any different from any other school day. It would be her last day, it turned out.

Bosbos and at least 27 other pupils, aged 7 to 13 years old, died while 60 others were hospitalized due to food poisoning at the San Jose Elementary School in Mabini, Bohol, 104 km northwest of the city. It was the worst reported case of food poisoning in the history of the province.

The children were poisoned after eating fried cassava, locally known as *maruyang balanghoy*, which was sold by a longtime vendor at the school area.

"It was during recess time. The children bought cassava," Vice Mayor Ester Tabigue of Mabini told The Associated Press.

Tabigi said authorities could not yet say how many children had fallen ill, adding that they were rushed to different hospitals in the neighboring towns and in this city.

"The children were brought to the hospital, they were vomiting and their stomachs ached," she said.

28 BOHOL/ A21

IN THE KNOW

Cyanide in cassava

CASSAVA, a starchy tuber similar to the potato, is an important food for Filipinos and more than 400 million other people in other tropical countries.

But eating it raw is not advisable because its roots contain cyanide, a poison also known as hydrocyanic acid or prussic acid, and is concentrated in the skin.

The sweet varieties of cassava are thought to contain less of the poison than the bitter ones.

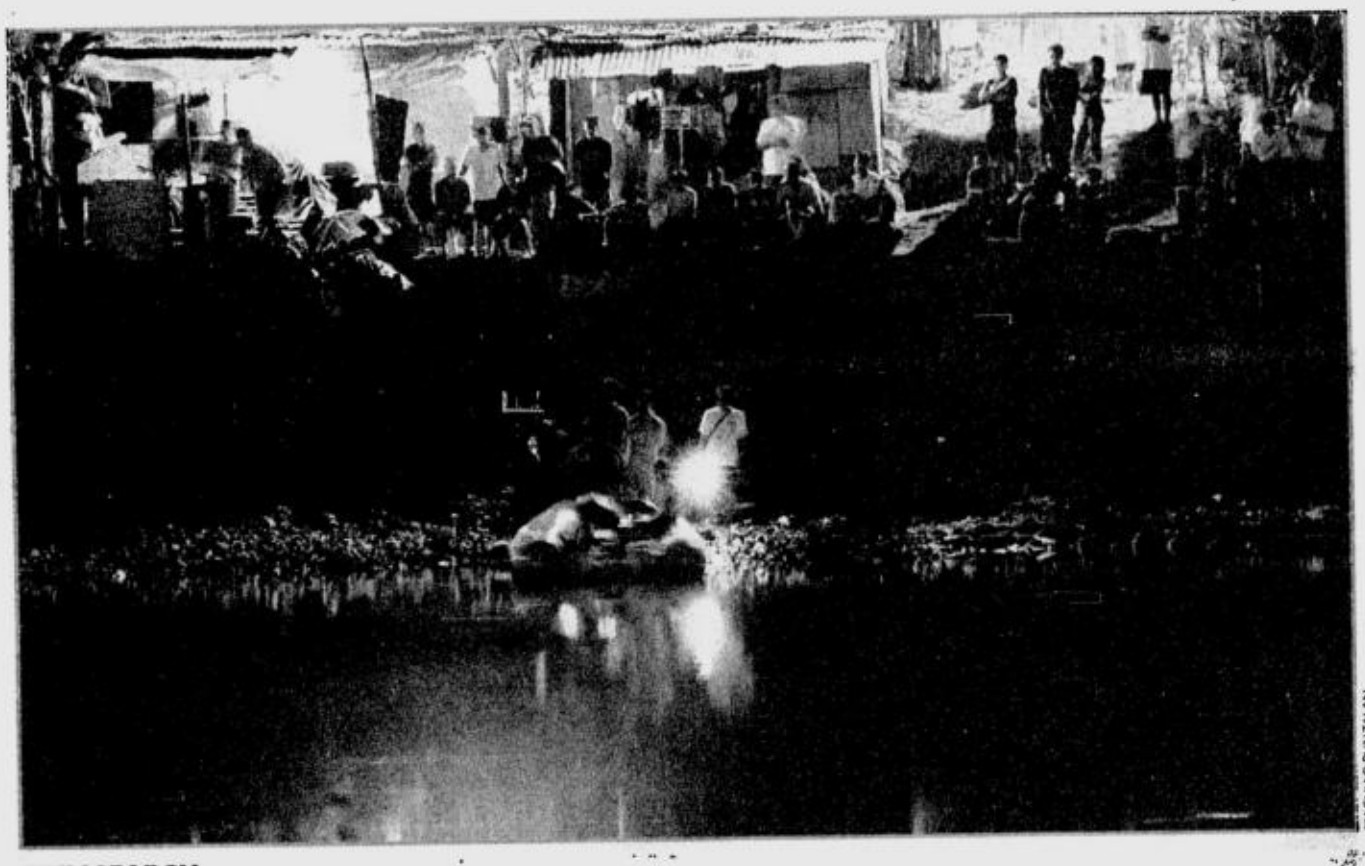
Preparatory to cooking cassava, the skin is peeled off. People also usually soak, dry or boil it to make it safe.

These steps may take much of the poison out, but a little is often left.

In small amounts, the cyanide in cassava is not harmful. But high levels can prevent oxygen from getting into the blood, and may even cause death.

In July 1998, cassava poisoning resulted in the death of a 9-year-old girl in Virac, Catanduanes. She and six other members of her family experienced

CYANIDE/ A21



JIM GUMO PUNZALAN

GRIM SEARCH
Residents of Barangay Pineda in Pasig City keep vigil as Makati rescuers search for missing brothers Richard and Ralgy Serantes. The two were swept away by strong currents Tuesday night as they tried to save passengers of a sinking banca. *(Story on Page A23.)*

Analysts give conflicting views on VAT bill

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

THE PHILIPPINES has turned the corner on its debt problems and congressional approval of a bill raising the value-added tax by 20 percent would further boost investor confidence in the local economy, according to investment bank UBS.

"I think there is a basis for being reasonably optimistic on the fiscal outlook going forward, but everyone's waiting with bated breath to see what Congress does on the VAT bill," Scott Wilson, executive director of UBS investment research, yesterday told reporters at an investment conference in Cebu.

That optimism, however, stands in stark contrast to a warning by an American investment advisory firm that raising the VAT rate to 12 percent from 10 percent would spark social unrest and push the country to an Argentine-type debt crisis.

"Legislation aimed at increasing the VAT, if implemented, will most likely touch off uncontrollable social revolt in the Philippines as fuel and utility prices are forced higher by rising international oil prices. Gaining the support of the powerful Catholic Church, such a revolt will probably lead to the demise of the Arroyo government," said Condor Advisers, Inc. president Jephraim Gundzik.

Condor Advisers specializes in risk analysis of emerging markets and its clients include the largest mutual and hedge funds in the United States.

In its report, UBS said the Pres-

ANALYSTS/ A21

Senate, House end row

By Juliet Labog-Javellana

ALLS WELL that ends well.

After a two-hour "cordial" meeting, Senate President Franklin Drilon and Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr. agreed to put the budget row between senators and members of the House of Representatives behind them and to fast-track the passage of the value-added tax (VAT) reform and to tackle the antiterrorism bill afterward.

In a joint statement, Drilon and De Venecia said they had a "successful meeting of the minds" on Tuesday night at the Shangri-La Makati Hotel.

The meeting that formally ended the dispute arising from the Senate's surprise adoption of the House-approved national budget was also attended by Sen. Manuel Villar (chair of the Senate finance committee), Rep. Rolando Andaya Jr. (chair of the House appropriations committee) and House Majority Leader Prospero Nograles.

Members of the House were enraged when the Senate adopted in toto the House-approved P907.56-billion budget for this

SENATE/ A7

HK graftbuster slams findings on RP corruption

By Christian V. Esguerra, Jolene R. Bulambot and Connie Fernandez

A FORMER official of Hong Kong's Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) slammed yesterday a foreign consultancy group's finding that the Philippines was the second most corrupt country in Asia.

"Don't believe this kind of perception index," Tony Kwok, former deputy commissioner of the ICAC, told INQUIRER editors and reporters over lunch.

Kwok has been named chief adviser of the Corruption Prevention Project of the Office of the Ombudsman.

A poll of 900 expatriate respondents across Asia by the Hong Kong-based Political and Economic Risk Consultancy Inc. (PERC) found that the Philippines was the most corrupt country in the region after Indonesia.

"I think there's no scientific proof for this survey because it's nothing more than a perception survey," Kwok said.

Although corruption was less today than it was in the days of the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos, it is more difficult to say whether the administration of President Macapagal-Arroyo "is any cleaner or dirtier" than her ousted predecessor Joseph Estrada, now on trial for plunder, PERC said in a report.

The findings of the PERC survey were reported by the INQUIRER yesterday on the opening of the two-day Euromoney Philippines Investment Conference at Shangri-La Hotel Resort in Cebu City.

President Arroyo was the keynote speaker at the conference, which was attended by 500 investors from 40 countries.

Ms Arroyo admitted that graft and corruption was an "endemic"

HK GRAFTBUSTER/ A21

GMA can't believe priests 'punishing' health workers

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo is incredulous that some Catholic health workers are being told to skip communion allegedly because of their involvement in the government's family planning programs.

"I can't believe that's true," Ms Arroyo yesterday told journalists in Cebu City when asked to comment on reports that health workers in Bohol were being treated this way for taking part in the "Ligtas Buntis" campaign of the Department of Health.

The President, a devout Catholic, said she did not think that promoting responsible parenthood constituted grounds for excommunication.

Asked whether these health workers should receive communion, she skirted the question and said she was "not the Pope."

Ms Arroyo said she was promoting responsible parenthood and "pushing preferably

GMA/ A8

EDWIN BACASMAS

HOT LUMBER. President Mapacapagal-Arroyo and Environment Secretary Mike Defensor listen to Task Force Sagip Kalikasan representative Alfonso Dagudag after a Wednesday inspection of seized sawn lumber hidden in container vans at Pier 3 of the Port of Cebu.

Women better gov't execs—SWS

WOMEN in the Philippines, one of the Asian countries with a female leader, are seen as better public officials than their male counterparts, according to a nationwide survey published yesterday.

The independent polling outfit Social Weather Stations (SWS) showed women scoring better than men in efficiency and honesty, among others.

The men were ahead in only two categories—leadership and bravery.

The Philippines has had two women leaders—Corazon Aquino who succeeded the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos in 1986 and Gloria Macapagal-Ar-

WOMEN/ A9

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Eastern Visayas and Mindanao will experience mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and isolated thunderstorms. The rest of the country will have partly cloudy to at times cloudy skies with isolated rainshowers or thunderstorms.
SOURCE: PAGASA

COMPILED BY: RAY LEYESA, PDI RESEARCH/03/10/05

E-mail: pr_news@inquirer.com.ph

Second FRONTPAGE

Text us your feedback: Inquirer news name/age/city/message to 2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart)

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Cloudy with Rains
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Cloudy with Rains
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	Cebu	Cloudy with Rains
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	Tacloban	Cloudy with Rains
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Cloudy with Rains
Legazpi	Partly Cloudy	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains
Catapan	Partly Cloudy	Davao	Cloudy with Rains

Iraqi militants threaten to kill Tarongoy

By Volt Contreras

AFTER a long silence, the captors of Roberto Tarongoy have released a video of their Filipino hostage which was aired by the Al-Jazeera Arab television network on Tuesday, the Department of Foreign Affairs said yesterday.

Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo, however, would not comment on reports that the video showed Tarongoy in an orange outfit—a sign that he is nearing execution—and that it conveyed the two conditions given for his release which the Philippines should meet in four days.

The hostage takers have reportedly demanded that the government recall all Filipino workers in Iraq and stop whatever cooperation it is giving to the United States military in Iraq.

"Last March 7, at 11 p.m., Doha (Qatar) time (4 a.m., March 8 in Manila), the Al-Jazeera network showed a video of Robert Tarongoy in the hands of his captors. He appeared well, identified himself and asked for his government's assistance," Romulo said in a press briefing.

Romulo said the government "continues to exert every effort to secure Robert's freedom."

The release of the video opened a new tense episode in government efforts to get back Tarongoy alive.

The 31-year-old accountant left the Philippines for Qatar in June 2004. A month later, he crossed to Baghdad to work for the Saudi Arabia Trading Co. that caters food for the Iraqi military.

TARONGOY

On Nov. 1, 2004, gunmen seized Tarongoy, American Roy Hallums and four others at the company's compound in Baghdad's upscale Mansour district.

In late January, the kidnappers released a video showing Hallum pleading for his life, with a rifle pointed at his head. The American said he had been taken by a "resistance group" for having worked with US forces in Iraq.

The four other hostages have been released by the kidnappers.

During yesterday's briefing, Romulo declined to take questions from reporters to "ensure that Robert's safety is not imperiled by any misunderstandings or misinterpretations."

But in his prepared statement, he set out the government's position on the Tarongoy hostage crisis which appeared to be a response to the two conditions reportedly given by the captors.

He said the Philippines does not allow its workers to go to Iraq and has stamped all Philippine passports with the words "Not Valid For Travel to Iraq" in Arabic and in English.

The government has obtained the cooperation of governments bordering Iraq not to allow Filipinos transit to Iraq, he added.

Romulo said those who have violated the ban and are already in Iraq are offered assistance to enable them to return to the Philippines.

The government has also started investigating Filipino companies and individuals caught violating the ban, he said.

As to Philippine assistance to the US military in Iraq, Romulo said the Philippines no longer has any troops in Iraq after "its small humanitarian contingent" returned to the country on July 19, 2004.

He said the Philippines "does not provide any support, including logistics and security support, to US military forces in Iraq."

Tarongoy's captors earlier demanded a $10-million ransom for his release.

At the time of his abduction, there were an estimated 6,500 Filipino workers in Iraq, most of them in working in US military bases.

Brace for cold nights

GRAB that jacket, blanket or mate.

The country's weather bureau is predicting cold summer nights in the Philippines next week due to a cold front, with air from the Siberian High coming into the country.

Daytime temperature in Metro Manila is expected to be around 20 degrees Celsius, and much lower in the northeastern part of Luzon from where the cold air mass would enter, the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration said.

Pagasa weather forecasting chief Herman Ngohayon said March 12 and 13 would be particularly colder because the cold air would come from the Siberian High in China, and not just the Pacific Ocean.

The two days would be similar to the cold weekend of March 5 and 6, when cold air from China also extended to the Philippines.

Like the inter-tropical convergence zone, a cold front is a rain-producing system.

A cold front causes snow in Japan and China, Pagasa said. The Philippines, which is at the tail-end of the cold front zone from last weekend, experienced rain showers and cooler nights.

The lowest temperature in Metro Manila next week is seen to be around 20 degrees Celsius and highest at 30.7 degrees Celsius, Pagasa said. The warmest temperature is usually recorded around 2 p.m. and the coldest around 5 a.m. *Blanche S. Rivera*

Bid of Chingkoe to travel abroad opposed

By Nelson F. Flores

SPECIAL government Prosecutor Dennis Villa-Ignacio said yesterday they would oppose the motion of businessman Faustino Chingkoe seeking permission to travel out of the country because he was a "flight risk."

Chingkoe, who heads 11 companies, is facing 83 cases of graft in connection with alleged attempts to defraud the government with billions of pesos worth of tax credit certificates (TCCs).

Recently, Chingkoe asked the Sandiganbayan's Fourth Division to be allowed to travel to Hong Kong and Canada from March 12 to April 11.

"His request should be turned down. He should not be allowed to travel as the possibility of flight is very great," Villa-Ignacio said. "We have already established that he is a holder of a Canadian, Fijian, Korean and Philippine passports."

Chingkoe's family, including his wife Gloria, is now living in Canada, and their extradition is being worked out by the Department of Justice.

The Fourth Division, chaired by Associate Justice Gregory Ong, previously allowed Chingkoe to leave for Canada to attend his daughter's graduation. This time, however, Chingkoe is being asked to post a bond of P2.5 million.

"But the bond is a not a guarantee. The amount sought as bond is chicken feed for this man," Villa-Ignacio said.

Chingkoe and his 11 companies have been accused by government prosecutors of collecting more than half of at least P5 billion tax credit in connivance with some finance officials.

Tax credits are refunds to export enterprises that paid duties and taxes for the imported materials that they use. Instead of cash refund, companies are issued TCCs by the One Stop Shop inter-agency tax credit and duty drawback center which they can use to settle tax obligations.

Chingkoe's textile companies were allegedly able to secure TCCs even if they were not qualified or legally entitled to avail of tax credit.

CHINGKOE

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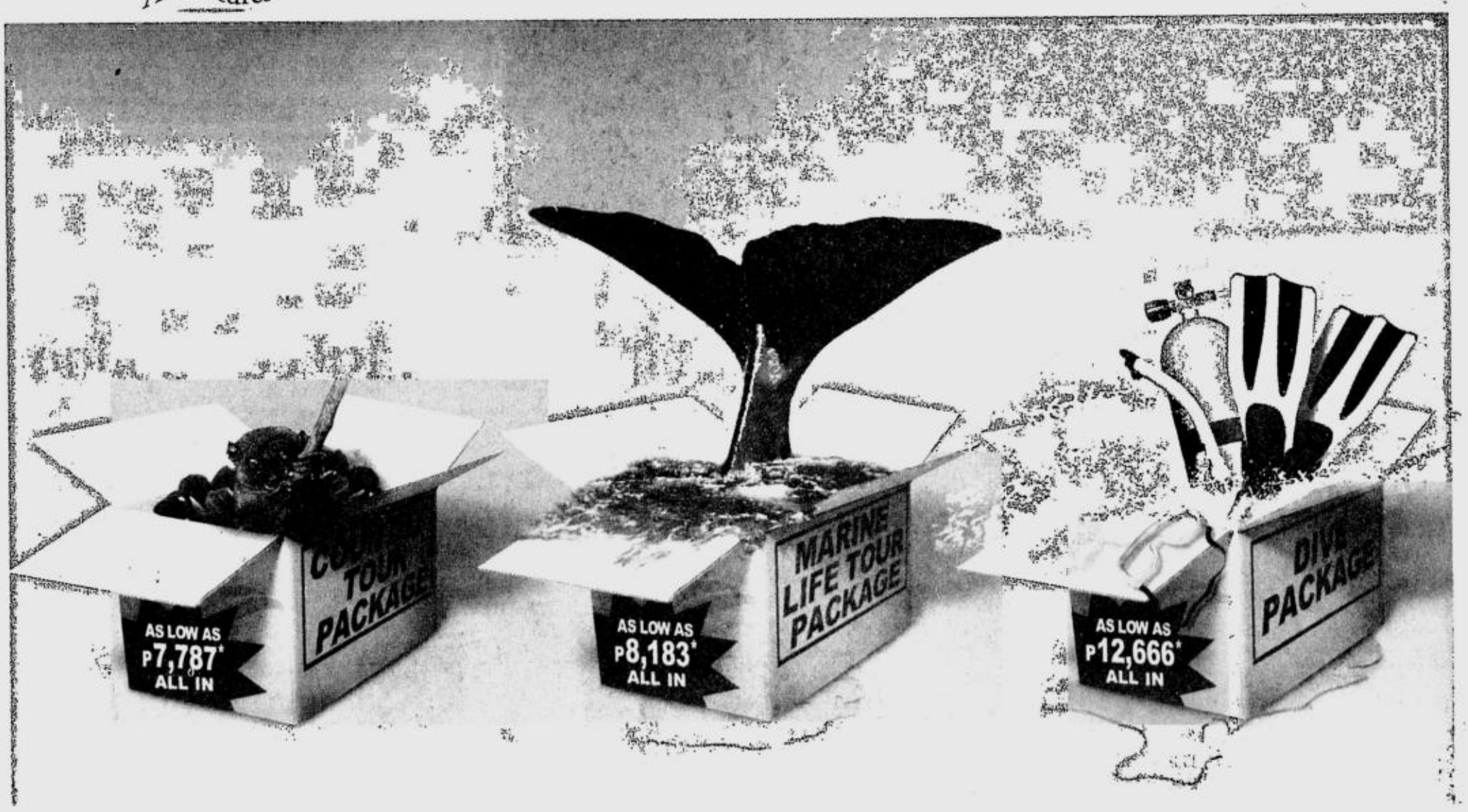

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CEBU PACIFIC

Abra mayor sues governor, colonel for murder

By Norman Bordadora
in Manila
and Artha Kira Paredes
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

THE MAYOR of Lagayan town in Abra has filed a complaint of attempted murder against the provincial governor and a military officer for allegedly plotting to kill her and her two sons last year.

In a four-page complaint lodged at the Office of the Ombudsman, Mayor Cecilia Luna said two soldiers of the Abra-based 41st Infantry Battalion had earlier submitted sworn statements saying Lt. Col. Noel Mislang, on orders of Abra Gov. Vicente Valera, sent them on a mission to kill her.

She said Valera had earmarked P300,000 to reward the two soldiers for her death, and the same amount for the death of each of her sons, both barangay officials.

"They wanted to make it appear that the New People's Army was behind [my killing]. If the killing was blamed on the NPA, it will be easier to [avoid] further investigation," Luna said in a news conference yesterday in Quezon City.

Ironically, the two soldiers—Corporals Antonio Rosqueta and Eduardo Barcelona—had quoted Mislang as saying that Luna and her family were supporters of the NPA in the Cordillera, according to intelligence officials in Fort Bonifacio.

Declared Awol

Rosqueta and Barcelona went to Fort Bonifacio last December after learning that they had been declared absent without leave. Mislang was reportedly angered by their continued failure to kill Luna and her sons.

On Dec. 22, or five days after they submitted their sworn statements, Rosqueta and Barcelona were ambushed in Aurora, Isabela, by alleged members of Valera's private armed group.

Rosqueta died on the spot. Barcelona was wounded, and has since promised to help Luna in pursuing her case against Valera.

"This is a criminal case. The administrative case will be next," said Luna's lawyer, Victor Dayrit Rodriguez.

Asked if they were seeking the governor's suspension, Rodriguez said:

LUNA: They'll pin blame on communist rebels.

VALERA: This would give me chance to clear my name.

"Yes, of course."

Valera, who was told of Luna's complaint as the Arya Abra festival was being celebrated, said it would give him a chance to clear his name.

'Publicity-seeker'

"It is quite obvious that the motive of the [complainant] is to seek publicity and spoil the province's festivities," he said.

In her complaint, Luna said Abra Rep. Luis Bersamin Jr. phoned her last Jan. 5 and told her to immediately go to Metro Manila because there was a plot to kill her.

She quoted Bersamin as saying that her alleged assassins, Rosqueta and Barcelona, had been ambushed.

Luna said that in the second week of January, Bersamin showed her the soldiers' affidavits.

But Valera dismissed the mayor's statements.

"I have a clear conscience. Throughout my life I have never ordered the murder or harassment of anyone. I just wish that a deeper investigation will be made," he said.

On Jan. 12, Army chief Lt. Gen. Generoso Senga relieved Mislang as commander of the 41st IB pending investigation of his supposed involvement in the plot to kill Luna.

Mislang was restricted from the headquarters of the 5th Infantry Division in Gamu, Isabela.

In an earlier interview, Valera described his relationship with Mislang as "professional."

In April 2004, Valera gave Mislang money for the use of Rosqueta and Barcelona in conducting surveillance on the mayor, according to the soldiers' accounts.

The soldiers were also reportedly supplied firearms and ammunition for their "special mission" to kill NPA supporters before the May elections.

In the first week of May, Mislang reportedly again met with the soldiers and gave them the plate numbers of Luna's vehicles and P20,000 for operational costs.

"We carried out the order as planned but desisted at the last minute upon discovering that our target is the incumbent mayor of Lagayan, and that there is no truth to the information fed us by Governor Valera and Colonel Mislang that she and/or members of her family are supporters or sympathizers of the NPA," Barcelona said in his affidavit.

Luna said in her complaint that she met with Barcelona on Feb. 20. She said the soldier admitted that he and Rosqueta had been under instructions from Valera and Mislang to kill her.

The assassins were to each receive P300,000 "for every successful hit on members of my family," she said.

Open secret

At the news conference, Luna said Valera wanted his political opponents among the mayors of Abra killed.

She also linked the governor to the killing of Mayors Jose Segundo of Tubo and Clarence Binwaren of Tineg early in 2000.

"It's an open secret in Abra," Luna said of Valera's alleged maintenance of a private armed group, his alleged reign of terror in the province, and his alleged links to "jueteng" operators there.

La Paz Mayor Ysrael Bernos, who was present at the news conference, confirmed this. "There is a reign of terror in the province," he said.

Bernos said that in November, Director General Edgar Aglipay of the Philippine National Police hosted peace talks in Camp Crame between Valera and his political opponents.

"We didn't know that even with the peace talks ... he wanted Mayor Luna and her sons killed," Bernos said.

Valera said he still wanted to continue with the peace talks being brokered by Abra Bishop Artemio Rillera.

But he said there would never be peace in Abra "unless there is justice."

DOE to oil firms: Stagger price hikes

By Connie E. Fernandez
PDI Visayas Bureau

MACTAN ISLAND—The Department of Energy (DOE) yesterday appealed to oil companies to stagger any planned increases in the pump prices of their petroleum products to soften the impact on motorists and on consumer prices.

Energy Secretary Vincent Perez made the request as Dubai crude, used as a benchmark by the country's oil refiners, struck a record high above $45 a barrel on Tuesday, partly on increased global demand as icy weather hit the northern hemisphere.

Dubai crude averaged $34.20 per barrel in December, local refiners said.

"We are appealing to them (oil companies) to stagger the increases... to spread it out over time to soften the impact on motorists," Perez told reporters on the sidelines of the Euromoney Philippines Investment Conference at Shangri-La Resort Hotel here.

Perez also called on the oil major companies to expand the number of gasoline stations in the country that provide a P1 per liter special discount on diesel for public utility vehicles.

"We believe that this is a way that we could mitigate the impact (on oil prices)," he told a news conference.

At present, only 250 gasoline stations nationwide are offering the special discount.

There are 4,000 gasoline stations in the country, of which some 600 of them are new oil players.

Perez said he also asked the three major oil players to "actively explain to the consuming public" what was happening to the prices of fuel in the world market.

The oil companies, he added, must do their share in making the people understand that the oil increases are affecting every country, not just the Philippines.

"We only account for less than one percent of oil consumption. There is no way we can influence prices. It is affecting major consumers like China, India, especially the United States," he stressed.

Perez, however, declined to say if oil consumers should expect another round of oil price increases.

As a deregulated industry, he added, the government could not dictate the prices of oil which have been rising to an all-time high in the world market.

But Perez said they were hoping that there would be a "seasonal correction" on the world oil prices.

He added they were waiting for the outcome of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (Opec) meeting in Iran on March 16 where members were expected to review their production policy.

In the meantime, Perez said he also hoped that members of the independent panel formed to review the Oil Deregulation Law would give enforcement powers to the DOE in order to protect consumers from gasoline stations that are not complying with standards and safety.

The panel was formed to look for ways to strengthen and refine the law that deregulated the oil industry.

Perez pointed out that by giving the DOE enforcement powers, the department could run after and shut down gasoline stations selling adulterated gasoline, illegal refillers of LPG, among others, without going through local governments units.

He pointed out that only 86 percent of gasoline stations complied with the standards set by the DOE. He said they could not run after the remaining 16 percent because the DOE does not have enforcement powers.

The DOE field office in the Visayas, for instance, only has six personnel that would monitor compliance of gasoline stations in the region Visayas region.

With a report from Reuters

AVENIDO

Narcs chief admits RP major shabu producer

By Luige A. del Puerto

THE PHILIPPINES may be considered a major producer of methamphetamine hydrochloride, also known as shabu, but it is not a major exporter of the illegal drug, the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency said yesterday.

PDEA chief Anselmo Avenido said reports citing the 2004 US International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (INCSR) that the country was a major shabu exporter have neither been validated nor confirmed.

"Our counterparts in those countries where shabu is allegedly being exported have told us that they have no big seizures of drugs originating from the Philippines, either made here or using us as transshipment point," a statement from Avenido's office said.

"If there were seizures, they were in very small quantities (not more than a kilo) and these were carried by overseas workers or tourists," he said.

Avenido said that while the seizure last year of shabu laboratories capable of producing large quantities of the drug could lead to the assumption that the shabu manufactured here cannot all be consumed in the country, this did not necessarily mean drug syndicates were exporting shabu to other countries.

Last year, the authorities dismantled 11 shabu laboratories and 10 chemical warehouses. Also seized were some P20.2 billion worth of precursors, chemicals and laboratory equipment.

The INCSR report did not paint an altogether negative picture of the drug situation in the country, according to the PDEA chief.

"The other portions (of the report) enumerated significant policy initiatives and accomplishments of the Philippine government," Avenido said.

The achievements of the PDEA and other law enforcement agencies were indications that the national anti-drug campaign was succeeding, he said.

"Partly because of this effort, the Philippines has been removed from the list of dirty money havens by the Paris-based Financial Action Task Force," the PDEA statement said.

On Tuesday, Philippine National Police chief Director General Edgar Aglipay downplayed the INCSR report.

"They are saying that because we have discovered the most number of drug laboratories in the world," Aglipay told reporters.

"We should be happy at the report. Other nations have not discovered that they have drug laboratories," he said.

Quoting a US Drug Enforcement Agency official that he met yesterday, Aglipay said the US based its conclusions that the country exported shabu on a finding that the Chinese who manufacture the drug in the country do not have a "distributing capability" here.

"Based on that, they concluded that the shabu is for abroad," he said.

The PNP chief said other countries have benefited from the Philippines' drive against drug syndicates, citing Malaysia and Australia as being some of the countries that have discovered drug laboratories in their territories because of information provided by the Philippines.

The report said Philippine law enforcement agencies redirected resources in 2004 to target major traffickers and large clandestine drug laboratories, and that the country continues to develop a dedicated counter-narcotics capability in the PDEA.

It said domestic production of shabu exceeds demand, with most of the precursor chemicals coming from China and Hong Kong.

"PRC and Taiwan-based syndicates have established all of the Philippines' clandestine methamphetamine labs using a network of ethnic compatriots with the necessary technical skills," the report said.

Solita Monsod at Kilosbayan today

AN INTERESTING forum featuring Prof. Solita C. Monsod will be held at the Yuchengco Seminar Room, De La Salle University, Taft Avenue, Manila at 2 p.m. today.

De La Salle faculty, student council leaders, along with Kilosbayan members and guests, will be in attendance.

Monsod will discuss "The Implications and Repercussions of the VAT Increase."

Dr. Michael Alba, PhD, dean of the College of Business and Economics, and Jillian Sze, president of the Student Council of De La Salle University, will be the reactors.

The public is welcome to attend the forum.

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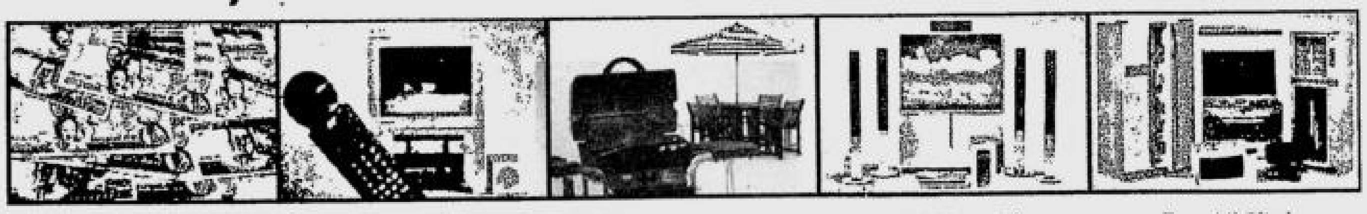

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5. Depositors & UITF investors may check their raffle entries at the RCBC or RCBC Savings Bank Business Center of their account.
6. Raffle draws are divided into Luzon, Metro Manila, Visayas, and Mindanao. National draw winners will be drawn from a combined pool of the four regions. There will be six (6) monthly draws which will start on March, 2005 and will last until August, 2005. Grand Draw will be on September 23, 2005.
7. All raffle numbers generated from February 4, 2005 to August 31, 2005 are included in the Grand Draw. Raffle draw winners will be electronically drawn. All draws will be held at 4:00 p.m., at the RCBC Plaza, 6819 Ayala Ave., Makati City 0727. Any change in time and venue will have notification at branches of RCBC and RCBC Savings Bank.
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YGC

Pagcor lost P880M to Atong Ang in Bingo 2 deal

By Nelson F. Flores

THE PHILIPPINE Amusement and Gaming Corp. was shortchanged by about P880 million by the consultancy firm of Charlie "Atong" Ang during its 20-day operation of the Bingo 2-Ball lottery, state prosecutors said at the plunder trial of deposed President Estrada at the Sandiganbayan.

Citing Pagcor documents, Special Prosecutor Dennis Villa-Ignacio said Pagcor was supposed to earn P45 million a day from Bingo 2-Ball but instead earned a measly P24 million during the 20 days that the controversial lottery game went on-line.

"At P45 million a day, Pagcor should have at least earned P900 million during the 20-day period that the Bingo 2-Ball was in operation," Villa-Ignacio said.

He said that out of the P24 million Pagcor income, two percent had to be deducted for Ang's consultancy fee and five percent for the Bureau of Internal Revenue franchise tax, reducing further the already meager earnings.

Villa-Ignacio said that despite claims that it was Pagcor that was operating the Bingo-2 Ball, it was actually Ang, a known Estrada gambling crony and alleged bagman, and his Prominent Marketing Corp. who were in charge.

He said this was admitted by the defense's 22nd witness, lawyer Emily Padua, who formerly headed Pagcor's entertainment and bingo department.

He said Pagcor had inexplicably entered into a "verbal agreement" allowing Ang to act as a consultant for the government's gaming firm.

"But it was Ang who was calling the shots and who even set the earnings quota for the government which was actually lower from the actual gross sale," Villa-Ignacio said.

Villa-Ignacio also expressed surprise at the absence of accountability on the part of Ang and his Prominent Marketing Corp. and the Pagcor's laxity in making sure that the government's interest was protected.

ANG

"For instance, Pagcor did not demand a bond from Prominent," Villa-Ignacio said.

It is also interesting that Pagcor, as admitted by Padua, consulted *jueteng* collectors nationwide as part of its feasibility study on the Bingo 2-Ball lottery, Villa-Ignacio said.

He also noted that known *jueteng* operators like Jessie Viceo and Rosario Charing Magbuhos were given franchises to operate the Bingo 2-Ball lottery in their localities.

"This clearly shows that the former President had a hand in Bingo 2-Ball," Villa-Ignacio said.

Earlier, former Pagcor general manager Alice Reyes testified that *jueteng*, the illegal numbers game, and Bingo 2-Ball were almost the same except that Bingo 2-Ball draws are done in public and that there were no under-the-table payments as in the case of *jueteng*.

"Everything is aboveboard in Bingo 2-Ball," Reyes said.

Estrada's lawyers said Padua's testimony further proved that Ilocos Sur Gov. Luis Chavit Singson's allegation that Estrada was the major beneficiary of *jueteng* was not true.

Why would Estrada have allowed the Bingo 2-Ball operation if it would kill *jueteng*, the goose that lays the golden egg, Estrada's lawyers argued.

They said that Padua's testimony strengthened Reyes' claim that Estrada did not interfere in the Pagcor's approval of the Bingo-2 Ball lottery.

But Singson, the government's chief witness in the plunder case, said Estrada bought the idea of the Bingo 2-Ball because it would give him a windfall of P160 million monthly compared with the P10 million in *jueteng* payoffs that he was receiving each month from November 1998 to September 2000.

Singson claimed to have been vindicated by Padua's testimony as he said it proved that Estrada had a hand in the operation of Ang's Prominent Marketing Corp.

TAN

CA junks case vs Dante Tan in BW scam

By Armand N. Nocum

THE COURT of Appeals has thrown out with finality the government's bid to prosecute Dante Tan, a crony of jailed ex-President Joseph Estrada, in the P2-billion BW Resources stock manipulation case, which was earlier dismissed by a Pasig court.

The CA said it found "no merit" in the government's motion for reconsideration on the Dec. 22, 2003 ruling of the Pasig Regional Trial Court dismissing the stock manipulation suit against Tan for violation of his right to due process.

Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez said the CA's Feb. 24 ruling effectively cleared Tan in the case and was a "substantial blow" to the government's efforts to get Tan, the former chair of the BW Resources Corp. (BWRC).

"I may not agree with the court, but we have to obey the court because it is the arbiter of the justice system," Gonzalez said.

"If he was acquitted by the court (CA), *tapos na yan* (it's over)," he said.

As for seeking other legal remedies, Gonzalez said: "If it is a criminal case, you cannot appeal that because that would result in double jeopardy."

But he noted that Tan was facing one more case concerning non-disclosure of BWRC stocks before the Department of Justice.

There are some 10 other cases against Tan relating to the BWRC stock scandal which led to the near-collapse of the Philippine Stock Exchange in 1999.

BWRC share prices jumped to a level that spawned suspicions of stock manipulation. The shares per stock rose from P0.80 per share to P30 to P107 within a few month's time.

The company neither made a disclosure of the increase, nor was able to explain the increase.

The surge led to frenzied unloading of stock, driving prices down to P27 per share, resulting in substantial losses for investors and broker houses.

The government sued Tan for insider trading, but Pasig RTC Judge Briccio C. Ygana dismissed the case, saying the court could no longer tolerate the reportedly unreasonable delay of the DOJ in prosecuting the insider trading case.

The judge also declared inadmissible almost all of the government's evidence—including an investigative report of the Security and Exchange Commission, a letter to the DOJ about the SEC's report on non-disclosure of beneficial ownership of Tan over the BWRC shares.

This prompted the DOJ to elevate the case to the CA. It accused Ygana of committing grave abuse of discretion.

The CA faulted the DOJ for failing to contest the RTC decision before the Supreme Court by filing a temporary restraining order to stop the lower court from acting on the motion for demurrer to evidence filed by Tan.

With the RTC decision becoming final, the CA said it can no longer be "annulled or set aside" even if the court had "committed an error of law and/or gravely abused its discretion."

It cited a SC decision stating that judgment of acquittal cannot be appealed because it will place the "accused twice in jeopardy of punishment."

Justice department officials earlier said that Tan has been moving from one country to another to escape trial in the Philippines.

The government sought his extradition from Australia in 2001. But he is now reported to be in China with which the Philippines has no extradition treaty.

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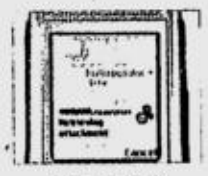

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NTC now monitoring TV, radio

By Clarissa S. Batino

AFTER receiving complaints from Malacañang, the National Telecommunications Commission yesterday said it had started monitoring television and radio shows, threatening to revoke permits of media outfits that would give bandits and terrorists airtime.

NTC chair Ronald Solis said franchise and licenses of media networks required that they refrain from broadcasting content that could "incite treason, rebellion or sedition" or endanger national security.

But he said the NTC would not violate the freedom of the press.

He said the certificate of authority issued by the NTC to television and radio companies required them to abide by the standards of the Kapisanan ng mga Brodkaster sa Pilipinas (KBP).

The KBP had directed its members the other day to deny airtime to terrorist groups after the Armed Forces of the Philippines complained that some networks were being used widely by terrorist groups to air their views against the state.

The KBP is worried that some statements may even contain coded messages that could threaten national security.

In a statement, the NTC expressed support for the decision of the KBP. The group has reminded its members to avoid contacts with terrorist groups because the franchises and permits issued them by Congress and the NTC are laws containing a provision that the grantee should not allow the security of the state to be jeopardized.

Aside from the restrictions imposed by permits and licenses, at least two NTC circulars require media outfits to ensure that their content do not "invite or encourage any subversive or treasonable acts," said Solis, an appointee of Ms Arroyo.

These are NTC Memorandum Circular No. 11-12-85 as expanded by NTC Circular No. 22-89 and NTC Circular No. 01-01-01 (reiterating Circular No. 11-12-85).

The regulator came up with a follow up circular during the height of the impeachment trial against ousted President Estrada, ordering all radio, television and media companies "to cut off" any broadcast "if the tendency is to propose and invite treason, rebellion or sedition."

"We received some complaints, including those from Malacañang. These complaints have prompted us to monitor the activities of broadcast networks," said Solis.

Upon proper complaint, and after due notice and hearing, the NTC said it would impose on erring radio and TV stations sanctions, including the suspension or revocation of their permits.

The NTC said media networks could violate the provisions of their permits by giving terrorist groups ample airtime.

For instance, a radio station interviewed a member of the Abu Sayyaf after the Feb. 14 bombings in three cities.

Solis said the Abu Sayyaf member made "incendiary comments" against the Arroyo administration.

"This is not censorship because they could be violating already the terms and conditions of their certificate of authority. We are not clamping down on the media. But we have to find out whether or not they are violating their permits," he said.

SC rules hotels liable for thefts despite waiver

By Armand N. Nocum

THE SUPREME Court has ruled that hotels can be held liable for the loss of items left in their safekeeping even if guests have signed a waiver absolving them of responsibility.

In a Feb. 17 decision, the SC affirmed a Court of Appeals ruling ordering the owner of the Tropicana Copacabana Apartment Hotel in Manila to pay an Australian businessman-philanthropist who lost money in the hotel in 1987.

In a 31-page decision penned by Associate Justice Dante O. Tinga, the SC's second division directed the YHT Realty Corp., the owner of the hotel, to pay Maurice McLoughlin US$2,000 and A$4,500, or their peso equivalent.

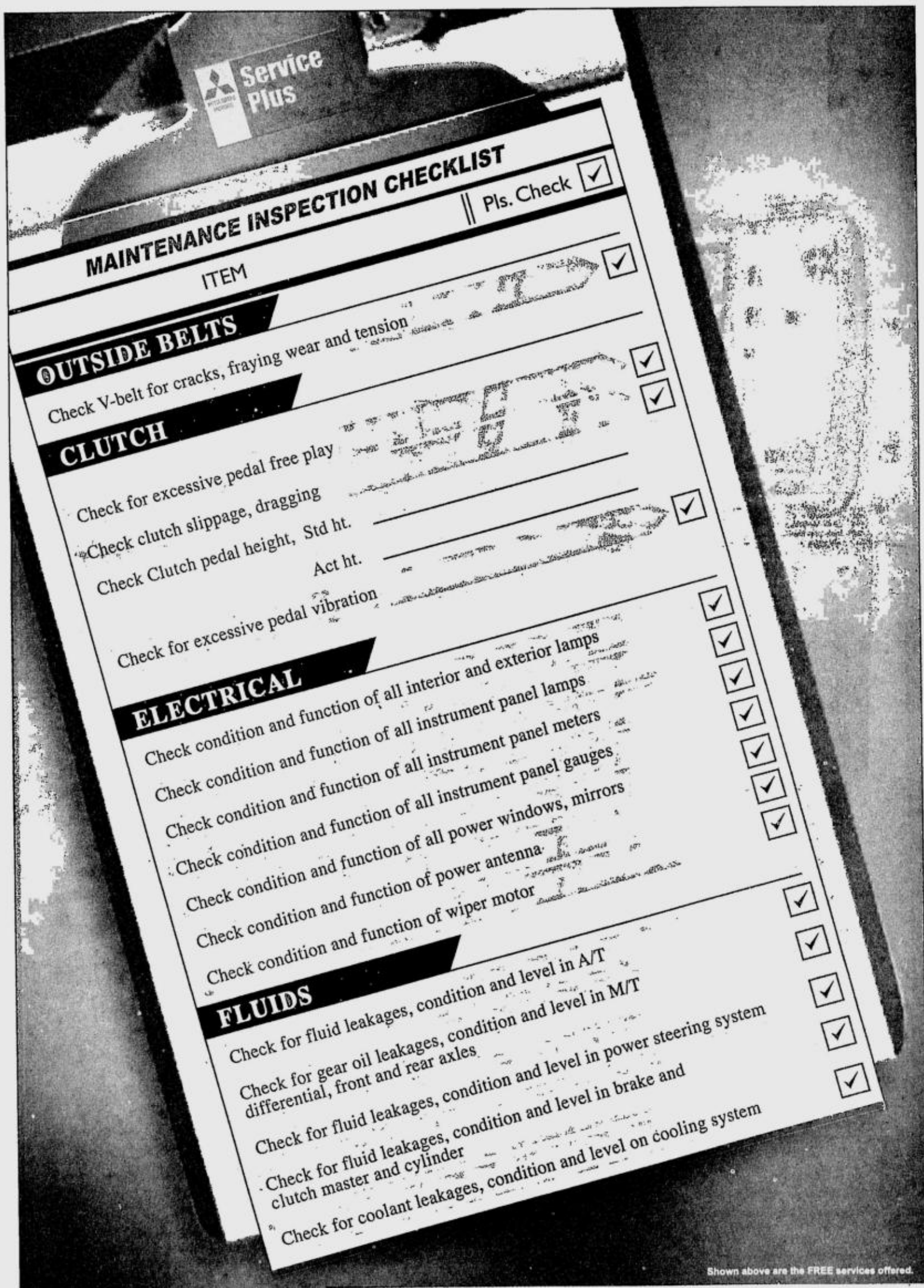
The court also asked the company to pay P1 million in damages.

The Australian's money was stolen from the hotel safe, allegedly with the collusion of hotel employees.

The SC threw out the defense of YHT that the waiver released it of liability for the loss, saying this was violative of the provisions of the New Civil Code.

"The New Civil Code is explicit that the responsibility of the hotel-keeper shall extend to loss of, or injury to, the personal property of the guests even if caused by servants or employees or keepers of hotels or inns as well as strangers," the SC said.

Article 1170 of the New Civil Code states that those who are guilty of negligence in the performance of their obligations are liable for damages.



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Thursday, March 10, 2005
4th Week of Lent

1st Reading: Ex 32:7-14
Gospel: John 5:31-47

Jesus said to the Jews, "If I bore witness to myself, my testimony would be worthless. But Another One is bearing witness to me and I know that his testimony is true when he bears witness to me. John also bore witness to the truth when you sent messengers to him, but I do not seek such human testimony; I recall this for you, so that you may be saved.

"John was a burning and shining lamp, and for a while you were willing to enjoy his light. But I have greater evidence than that of John—the works which the Father entrusted to me to carry out. The very works I do bear witness: the Father has sent me. Thus he who bears witness to me is the Father who sent me. You have never heard his voice and have never seen his likeness; then, as long as you do not believe his messenger, his word is not in you.

"You search in the Scriptures thinking that in them you will find life; yet Scripture bears witness to me. But you refuse to come to me, that you may live. I am not seeking human praise; but I have known that love of God is not within you, for I have come in my Father's name and you do not accept me. If another comes in his own name, you will accept him. As long as you seek praise from one another instead of seeking the glory coming from the only God, how can you believe?

Do not think that I shall accuse you to the Father. Moses himself in whom you placed your hope, accuses you. If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote of me. But if you do not believe what he wrote, how will you believe what I say?"

Commentary

John was a burning and shining lamp! High praise from Jesus. But Jesus' own words and works are far greater than John's ever were, because what Jesus does was entrusted to him by the Father. His works bear witness that God the Father has sent him. These works must be accepted or rejected. Jesus is the messenger of God and if we do not believe and obey, then God's word and life is not in us, however much we profess to be believers. All the Scriptures bear witness to Jesus and yet we refuse to come to Jesus and know life. Jesus is clear—the love of God is not in us! We seek praise and acceptance from others, from power and nations, governments and money—instead of seeking the glory of God—and we will be judged by our words and deeds. We are deep into Lent, approaching the judgment of God upon us in the Cross. Lord, may we stand with you, believing and practicing your Word and not seeking to validate our lives on the words of others. May your love be in us.

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SUPREME COURT DOCTRINES

LABOR LAW (LABOR RELATIONS LAW)—Abolition of employee's position—Petitioner was laid off, following the abolition of the Ministry of Public Works and the Ministry of Public Highways under Section 1 of EO No. 710, series of 1982, of the President. To abolish means to do away with, to annul, abrogate or destroy completely. It denotes an intention to do away with the office wholly and permanently. A valid abolition of offices is neither removal nor separation of the incumbents. No dismissal or separation arises because the position itself ceases to exist. Since the petitioner was not appointed by the Minister to any position in the new Ministry, she was deemed laid off, conformably to Section 10 of EO No. 710. The appointment of qualified personnel of the abolished Ministries to appropriate positions in the new Ministry was addressed to the sound discretion of the new Minister. In this case, the petitioner failed to show that the Minister acted in bad faith in not appointing her to any position in the Siquijor District Engineering Office under the new Ministry. [Citations omitted.] [Justice Callejo, Sr., Second Division, Tan vs Department of Public Works and Highways, G. R. No.1433289, November 11, 2004] By R. B. Vera

Senate, House end row

From page A1

year that cut the pork barrel of legislators by 40 percent.

Because the Senate adopted the House version, there was no more need to convene a bicameral conference committee where House members had hoped to restore the cuts in their pork barrel.

Asked if the word war between the two chambers was over, Drilon said: "It's all over except probably in the media."

Most cordial atmosphere

Drilon and De Venecia said that "in the spirit of reconciling our legislative priorities and moving legislation," they agreed on five points at the meeting held "under the most cordial atmosphere and exchange of ideas."

The two leaders agreed "to exert our utmost efforts in securing approval of the two-phase value-added tax legislation before Congress begins a three-week recess on March 18."

They said both chambers agreed to give the "highest political priority to passing the VAT legislation so as to achieve the government's target of P80 billion in new revenues for 2005."

They also agreed to ask President Macapagal-Arroyo to sign within the next few days the 2005 General Appropriations Act since they are "determined to put the budget row behind us and move on to the other remaining legislative priorities of Congress."

Prompt action

Drilon and De Venecia said the two chambers should "prompt action on pending measures intended to improve and ensure the country's fiscal and financial stability."

"These will improve measures that will reform the financial sector and develop the capital market; stimulate jobs and income generation; improve the peace and order situation, provide better health and education services as well as ensure effective and graft-free governance," the two leaders said.

They agreed to immediately act on the antiterrorism bill, which they said they deem vital to the nation's security.

With the Senate and House ending their rift over the national budget, Malacañang pressed Congress anew to pass the Palace-sponsored fiscal reforms.

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye reiterated that the goal of Malacañang in pushing for fiscal reforms was to "reduce dependence on foreign loans in financing our development projects."

The House had approved two separate measures that sought to increase the VAT rate from 10 to 12 percent and to widen the VAT coverage.

The Senate, on the other hand, has started floor deliberations on a measure keeping the VAT rate at the current 10 percent while lifting the exemptions of certain goods and services.

Displeasure

Sen. Ralph Recto, chair of the ways and means committee which retained the 10-percent VAT rate but lifted the exemptions of 12 goods and services, said there were only two or three senators who favor the 2-percentage-point increase in VAT being pushed by Malacañang.

Recto expressed confidence that a "great majority" of the 23 senators were in favor of the Senate committee report.

"It's safe to say that a majority in the Senate want 10 percent and agree that lifting exemptions with a single rate is the key," he said.

Sen. Panfilo Lacson of the opposition confirmed he was against the increase of VAT to 12 percent. "I'd rather see the retention of the 10 percent and the expansion or lifting of exemptions," he said.

But administration Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago disagreed with the Senate version, saying the version of the Department of Finance and the House was better.

"I do not think that the removal of 12 exemptions can take the place of a 2-percentage point increase in the VAT rate. Maybe the Senate can reduce the exemptions and not raise the rate but it may be a good idea to give the President the authority to raise the rate by as much as 2 percentage points," Santiago said.

World Bank comment

Senators were irked by the World Bank's declaration backing the 12-percent VAT rate.

"Well, we enact legislation on the basis of what we view to be our national interest not on the basis of the World Bank's prescription," Drilon said.

Sen. Joker Arroyo said legislators should listen to the people, not to the World Bank.

For his part, Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile said the World Bank should leave the passage of a VAT measure to the judgment of lawmakers.

But Kilosmasa, a coalition of pro-VAT groups holding rallies in front of the Senate, called on the senators to heed the World Bank's concern.

"The loss in donors' and investors' confidence in the Philippines will lead to greater hardships among our people," Kilosmasa spokesperson Jose L. Moreno Jr. said in a statement.

Cebu rally against VAT increase

But in Cebu City, thousands of Cebuanos gathered yesterday afternoon to express their opposition to the proposed increase in the VAT rate.

The rally coincided with the visit of Ms Arroyo, who spoke at the Philippine Investment Conference at the Shangri-La Mactan Island Resort in Lapu-lapu City.

Convenors of the two broad coalitions against the proposed VAT increase—the VAT Oppositors in Cebu (VATOc) and the Katawhan Batok sa VAT Increase (KomVATi)—said they were hoping that the President would hear the sentiments of the Cebuanos.

"If she would ignore us, then I can say that she became insensitive to the Cebuanos, who voted for her in the last election," Provincial Board Member Victor Maambong said.

Souie Mercado of the Association of Concerned Consumers and Commuters said it was a mere coincidence that the rally happened during the visit of the President.

Leaders of the Catholic Educators Association of the Philippines headed by Fr. Roderick Salazar joined the rally, which converged at Fuente Osmeña circle from at least four assembly areas.

Lawyers headed by Democrito Barcenas, president of the Integrated Bar of the Philippines Cebu City, and other professionals marched from the Capitol building. Seminarians, students and teachers from the University of San Carlos (USC) Boys High and St. Theresa's College marched from the Mango avenue area; militant groups and students from USC main campus marched from Colon and P. Del Rosario Area, and urban poor groups marched from B. Rodriguez Street.

At Fuente Osmeña circle, the protesters formed a cross as speakers called on Cebuanos to oppose the proposed increase in VAT, saying it would be an added burden to consumers already reeling from high prices. *With reports from Christine O. Avendaño and TJ Burgonio in Manila and Jhunnex Napallacan, PDI Visayas Bureau*

Anemic anti-graft drive blamed on fund lack

By Gil Cabacungan Jr.

MALACAÑANG yesterday attributed the modest performance of its anti-corruption campaign to the lack of funds and personnel and the gridlock in the courts.

Presidential Chief Legal Counsel and anti-graft czar Merceditas Gutierrez said the Office of the Ombudsman had earlier complained about the lack of money to hire more investigators and prosecutors, resulting in the slow processing of cases.

Gutierrez said the government was conducting lifestyle checks on 50 state employees and preparing forfeiture proceedings on three officials in the military, two in the Bureau of Internal Revenue, two in the Bureau of Customs, and one in the Department of Public Works and Highways.

"Hopefully, with the approval of the new budget, [the Ombudsman] will have 48 prosecutors and 200 investigators," she said.

Gutierrez lamented the delay faced by government prosecutors when filing cases against corrupt officials.

She said graft cases were getting tied up in the judiciary for so long that prosecutors had been forced to move to the next case just to make progress.

Gutierrez also said many prosecutors were still adjusting to President Macapagal-Arroyo's directive to take over the alleged ill-gotten property of certain officials even before the courts had decided on the graft cases.

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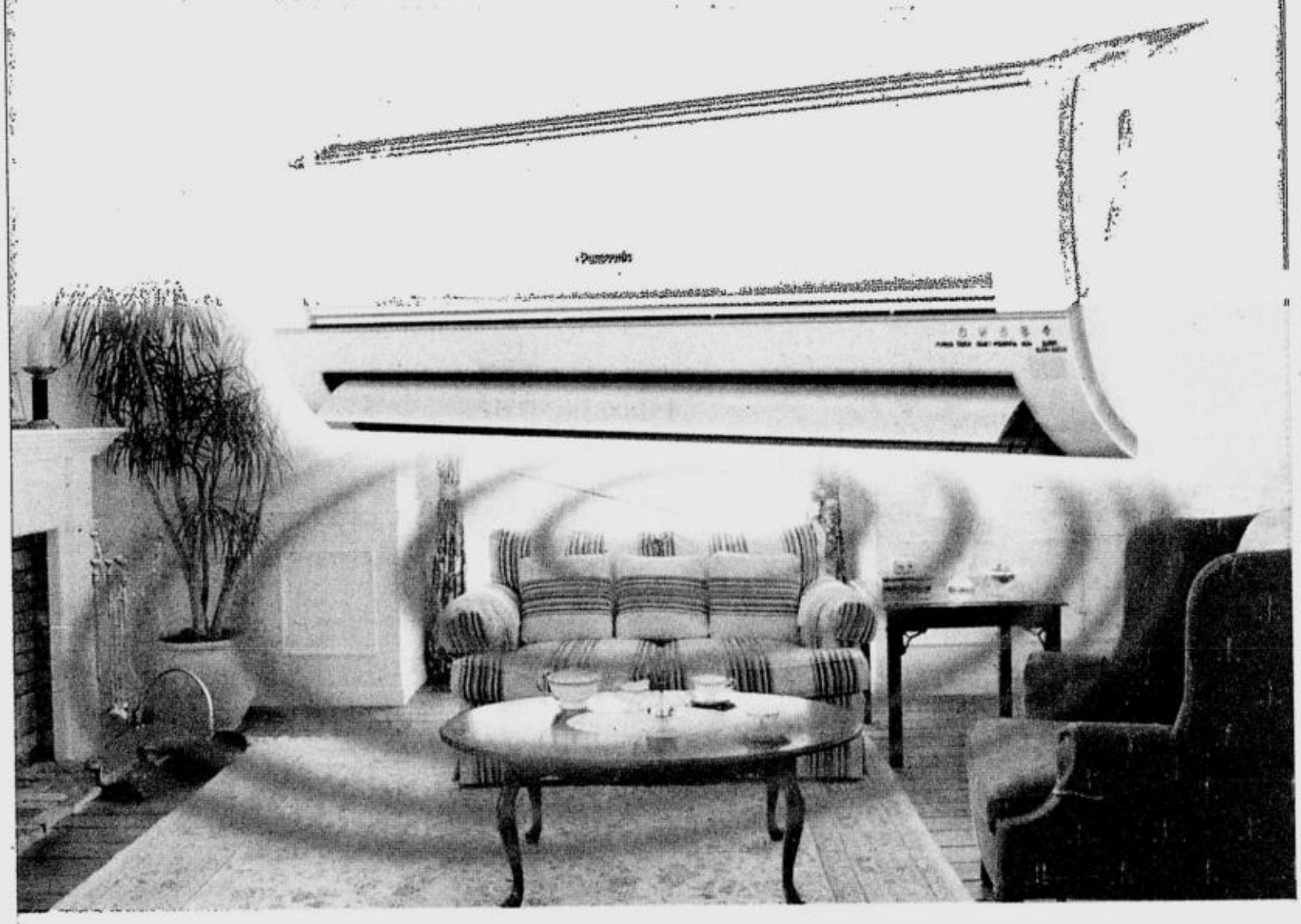

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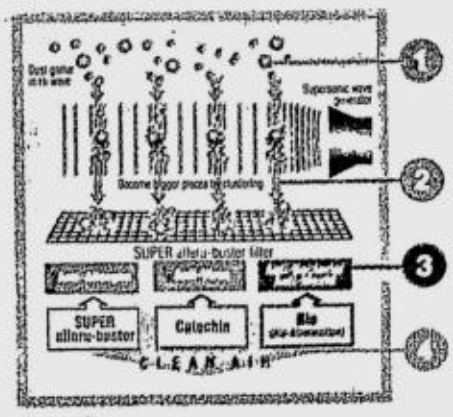

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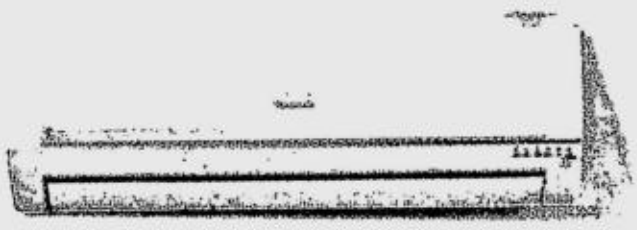

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GMA can't believe priests 'punishing' health workers

From page A1

the natural method of family planning."

She pointed out that many other countries were promoting other family planning methods, "and I do not know that any of them [has been] excommunicated."

A ranking official of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines said he had no knowledge of any priest refusing to give communion to parishioners supporting "Ligtas Buntis" and the proposed Responsible Parenthood and Population Management Act of 2005 (House Bill No. 3773).

Drink up or speak up. Our continued reliance on imported fossil fuels like coal and oil for energy is one of the largest reasons behind problems like global warming, air pollution, the rise in respiratory ailments, and the worsening condition of our water supplies. This dependence also leaves us economically vulnerable to the spiraling cost of coal and oil in the world market. And things will only get murkier unless we reduce our use of coal and oil and push for the increased use of renewable energy sources like geothermal, wind, biomass, hydro, and solar. Speak up and let the government know you want clean energy. Text WWF YES <Your Name> to 2366 for Globe (P2.50/text) or log on to www.powerswitch.org.ph/vote. Act now and help get the Renewable Energy Bill passed into law. Maybe then, the future won't be such a hard thing to swallow.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER WWF

'Public sin'

Caloocan Archbishop Deogracias Iñiguez, head of the CBCP committee on public affairs, also told reporters that a priest could only refuse to give anyone communion if the latter had committed a "public sin."

"I don't know if [supporting family planning programs] is a public sin," he said.

But if the reports are true, Iñiguez said, he would "not readily agree" to such an act.

Some Church leaders have taken a conciliatory stance in response to a lawmaker's challenge for a public debate on HB 3773.

Iñiguez said the Church was not "imputing guilt" on proponents of the measure.

"It's only the perception of the Church that what they're trying to pass is not in accordance with the teachings of the Church," he said, adding:

"But that doesn't necessarily mean that they have sinned against the Church. If that is their honest conviction, we cannot do anything about it."

Iñiguez said Church leaders would not engage anyone in a debate and would instead settle for dialogues.

He said the bishops had also been contacting lawmakers in their respective areas to explain the Church's position.

'Positive' response

In Tacloban City, "Ligtas Buntis" is receiving a "good and positive" response from its target clients despite strong objections from the Catholic Church, according to Dr. Jaime Opinion and Cielito Esquibel, city health officer and population officer, respectively.

But Fr. Erby Lajara, archdiocesan family coordinator of the Palo Diocese, downplayed the city officials' claim.

"While we have to respect those who appear to have accepted this campaign, our opposition ... remains as we view it as another population campaign," Lajara said.

"The Church's stand remains—that this campaign promotes contraceptives, which are immoral and evil," he added, echoing an earlier statement made by Archbishop Pedro Dean of the Palo Diocese.

But Opinion said the target clients—pregnant women and persons of reproductive age—had accepted "Ligtas Buntis."

"Since we started the campaign here, we have yet to receive any negative reaction from the public. Instead, what our team has been receiving is a good and positive response," he said.

Target: 20,000

Opinion said the campaign officially started in Tacloban on Feb. 28, with about 20,000 women as target.

Since then, the team composed of personnel from the city health and population offices and a barangay health worker has covered more than 1,000 target clients from 54 of the city's 132 barangays.

As part of the campaign, the DOH gives an on-the-spot lecture on the pros and cons of both artificial and natural family planning methods, as well as the disadvantages of early pregnancy.

Esquibel said contraceptive pills were given only if the target client asked for it, and only after it had been ascertained that she could safely take the pills.

Opinion said the small number of clients could be attributed to the lack of personnel from the offices concerned.

"We also have to do other office work apart from attending [to the] house-to-house campaign," he said.

Not abortionists

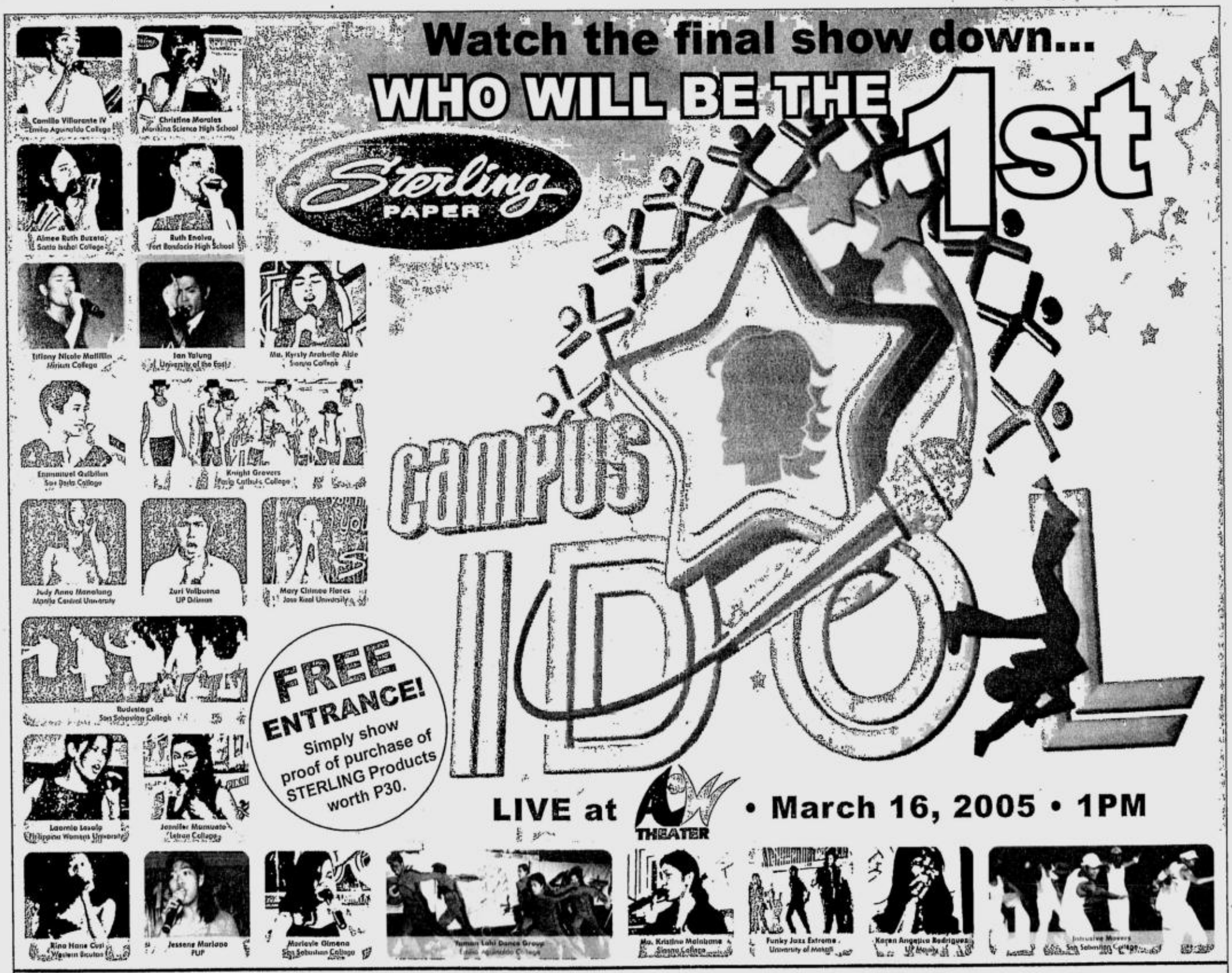
Opinion said it was their hope that the Church would stop opposing the campaign aimed at helping women have safe pregnancies.

"We are not abortionists. This is not illegal and immoral. We are just doing our job," he said. "I respect [the Church's] position. I just hope that they, too, will respect our choice or stand."

Esquibel said the campaign was not a population control program but a drive to make young people aware of safe sex and the bad consequences of engaging in premarital sex.

She said they were also mindful of the sensitivity of the campaign and had urged members of the team to be open-minded and keep from arguing with those opposed to it.

"So far, this approach [has been] working," Esquibel said. "We just give the information and it is up to them to decide." *Reports from Christine O. Avendaño and Christian V. Esguerra in Manila; Joey A. Gabieta, PDI Visayas Bureau*



DOJ chief faces CA bypass

By TJ Burgonio

JUSTICE Secretary Raul Gonzalez will likely be bypassed by the congressional Commission on Appointments for failing to submit the required documents.

Gonzalez's confirmation has not been taken up by the CA sub-committee on justice, chaired by Sen. Panfilo Lacson, because he has so far failed to produce his income tax return for 2002.

"He still lacks the ITR for 2002. So we cannot proceed. Plus the fact that I have not acquired jurisdiction over him because there's no endorsement yet from the chairman of the CA," Lacson told reporters.

The commission is chaired by Senate President Franklin Drilon.

"He shouldn't blame the committee or the CA. He should blame himself because he has not submitted the remaining documentary requirement. Under the rules, one should complete the documentary requirements before we can proceed," Lacson said.

The CA will conduct its final plenary hearing on March 16, two days before Congress adjourns for the Lenten break. Lacson's sub-committee is not scheduled to hold any hearing that day.

Gonzalez, who had submitted his ITRs for 2001, 2003 and 2004, said his ITR for 2002 was missing and has requested the Bureau of Internal Revenue to help him locate a copy. He has yet to get a reply from the BIR.

He said he had informed the CA about his missing ITR and had been asked to present instead two affidavits of loss and a withholding tax receipt. The CA, however, decided these documents were insufficient and required that Gonzalez produce his ITR.

"I have a feeling that they're trying to make it difficult for me. Otherwise, this won't be happening to me," Gonzalez said in a phone interview.

He said he was leaving everything up to President Macapagal-Arroyo.

After Congress resumes sessions in April, Gonzalez can be re-appointed by the President.

"If you recall Secretary (Hernando) Perez and Secretary (Heherson) Alvarez were bypassed a number of times, but they were eventually confirmed," Gonzalez said.

"It's not that crucial (confirmation), but it's better to get confirmed," he said.

Gonzalez, who has been linked to a sex scandal, has accused Lacson of stalling his confirmation at the CA, which the senator has denied.

He believes that Lacson's animus stems from Gonzalez's alleged move to dissuade barangay officials from attending a meeting which the senator called in 2003.

Now it's Protestant bishops vs Catholic bishops

NOW IT'S bishops versus bishops.

Taking up the cudgels for House Bill No. 3773, the Council of Christian Bishops of the Philippines (CCBP) yesterday challenged its Catholic counterpart to cite a solid biblical basis for the latter's adamant stand against family planning.

At a press conference in the House, CCBP chair Bishop Fred Magbanua said the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) should produce proof showing that HB 3773 (or the proposed Responsible Parenthood and Population Management Act of 2005) was endorsing abortion.

The CCBP is composed of ministers of about 51,000 Protestant, evangelical and born-again Christian churches, which have a total of 12 million members.

Magbanua said the CCBP was willing to debate with the CBCP on canon and encyclical laws dealing with family planning.

"They lack understanding [of the bill]. Many of them are misinformed," he said, adding that many Catholic priests actually held a progressive view on the issue.

Magbanua said the measure would go a long way in improving the quality of life. "We're pro-life, so it means that this bill is against abortion. That's why we're supporting it," he said.

Also present during the press conference organized by the Philippine Legislators' Committee on Population and Development Foundation Inc. were Rep. Rodante Marcoleta of the party-list group Alagad and Representatives Nereus Acosta, Janet Garin and Nerissa Ruiz.

All four pushed for the passage of HB 3773, a consolidated version of several bills on reproductive health and women's rights that has so far gathered 80 signatures in the House. *Michael Lim Ubac*

Women better gov't execs—SWS

From page A1

royo who replaced deposed President Joseph Estrada in 2001 and won a fresh six-year term last year.

The SWS survey results were released after the international corruption monitor, Political and Economic Risk Consultancy Ltd., released a 2005 survey of foreign businessmen who ranked the Philippines as the second most corrupt country in Asia after Indonesia.

Fifty-two percent of the SWS nationwide sample of 1,440 adults surveyed last Oct. 19 to Nov. 2 said women in Philippine officialdom were more efficient in allocating government resources, while 48 percent said both men and women in government were equally honest and not corrupt.

However, 38 percent said women public officials were more honest, compared to only 14 percent saying men were more honest.

"The general belief that women do better than men as public officials cuts across gender, geographic area, and social class," the SWS said in a statement.

The survey, sponsored by the Australian Agency for International Development, had a margin of error of plus or minus three percentage points.

Sixty-five percent of respondents, however, said men were braver in the face of physical danger, while 48 percent said men were better in getting subordinates to follow their orders, compared to 20 percent who said women were better leaders in these categories. *AFP*

Erap's son angry RP not No. 1 on graft list

From page A1

Mayor JV Ejercito, the Philippines should have emerged No. 1, and not No. 2, in the survey conducted in January and February by the Hong Kong-based Political and Economic Risk Consultancy Ltd. (PERC).

"The Philippines can be considered the most corrupt Asian country today because of the Arroyo administration's blatant abuse of power and misuse of our treasures," Ejercito, one of the sons of ousted President Joseph Estrada, said yesterday in a statement.

In the PERC survey of more than 900 expatriate respondents across Asia, the Philippines was ranked second only to Indonesia in terms of corruption.

Ejercito has consistently accused President Macapagal-Arroyo of having illegitimately snatched the presidency from his father.

Yesterday, he said in a phone interview: "They have accused President Estrada of corruption and immorality. How come things have worsened now?"

He also said corruption in the country had grown to "an uncontrollable and immeasurable scale, which the Arroyo family itself is greatly involved with."

Ejercito said gambling had also worsened—an apparent reference to an earlier "exposé" of his half-brother, Sen. Jinggoy Estrada.

How to solve the problem?

The solution must start from the top, the mayor said.

"Arroyo must set the example. They have to prove to the people that they have nothing to do [with corruption]," he said.

"But then, when there's smoke, there's fire," he added. *"Siguro kung wala na si Gloria, mawawala na rin ang corruption* (Perhaps when Ms Arroyo goes, so too will corruption)."

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The WORLD

Editor Luverne B. Gueco

Syria starts redeployment of troops

BEIRUT—Some 6,000 Syrian troops began redeploying toward the eastern Bekaa Valley on Tuesday, as Lebanon's pro-Syrian camp staged a massive show of force at a rally by some 400,000 demonstrators in Beirut.

Caretaker Defense Minister Abdul Rahim Murad said the redeployment would take between a week and 10 days.

The withdrawal will also cover Syrian intelligence personnel, including their headquarters in Beirut, a senior Lebanese military official said on condition of anonymity.

The start of the redeployment came after a meeting in Damascus of a joint Lebanese-Syrian military committee.

A committee statement said the redeployment was being carried out in line with the Saudi-brokered Taef accord which ended Lebanon's 1975-1990 civil war.

It said the Syrian troops were being pulled back from Tuesday to the Bekaa Valley and to Dahr al-Baidar at the entrance to West Bekaa, along the arc of Hammana, Mdairej and Ain Dara on a ridge overlooking Beirut.

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad on Monday pledged to pull back his country's remaining 14,000 troops in Lebanon toward the Bekaa, where most of the troops are already based, by the end of March.

But he stopped short of announcing a full withdrawal.

Under the Taef accord, the Syrian and Lebanese governments are to decide the strength of the Syrian force remaining in the Bekaa and when they would be withdrawn beyond the nearby border into Syria.

In Washington, Syrian Ambassador to the United States Imad Moustapha said Tuesday that Syrian troops will be out of Lebanon long before May.

"They are actually being withdrawn today," the ambassador told CNN television. "We will do this as soon as possible, even long time before May."

The comment followed a demand by US President George W. Bush, who warned Syria earlier Tuesday that its military and intelligence forces should be out of Lebanon before the May parliamentary elections in the country.

Bush also warned his Syrian counterpart, Bashar al-Assad, against resorting to what he called "delaying tactics and half measures."

Moustapha said Syria will first pull out its forces to the Bekaa Valley and then inside Syria proper.

"We have actually pulled some of those troops into Syria as of today," he stated.

Earlier Tuesday, some 400,000 demonstrators swarmed the heart of Beirut amid a sea of red-and-white Lebanese flags as Syria prepared for the redeployment, according to estimates by AFP correspondents.

Hassan Nasrallah, head of the powerful Shiite movement Hezbollah, warned Washington, which has been leading demands for a Syrian pullout, not to interfere in Lebanon.

But Bush repeated his demands in a Washington speech. *AFP*

A LEBANESE police officer on a top roof watches the crowd of pro-Syrian protesters gather near the UN building during a pro-Syria demonstration in Beirut, Lebanon, Tuesday. AP

Pope to give Easter blessing but may skip procession

VATICAN CITY—Pope John Paul II, who is recovering from throat surgery, is to give his traditional Easter blessing later this month but it remained unclear Tuesday if he would preside over a key procession two days earlier.

The Pope will bless the faithful in his "Urbi et Orbi" (To Rome and the World) benediction on Easter Sunday, the Vatican said in a statement, without saying where the Pontiff would officiate from.

John Paul II, who will be 85 years old in May, was hospitalized on Feb. 24 for the second time in a month and the Vatican said in its latest health update on Monday that his rehabilitation and speech therapy continued to go well.

The statement listed the names of the cardinals presiding over the ceremonies of Holy Week up to March 27, but the Vatican gave no indication of who would oversee the Way of the Cross procession on Good Friday, leaving open the door for a last-minute decision to attend by the Pope.

POPE JOHN PAUL II

The calendar covers the week between Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday, or March 20-27, when Christians mark the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Christ.

Ceremonies were normally led by the Pope himself but given John Paul II's deteriorating health his gruelling Easter schedule was already cut back in previous years.

"The celebration of the Holy (Easter) Mass will be presided by Cardinal Angelo Sodano, secretary of state, at the front of Saint Peter's Basilica.

"After the celebration at noon, the Holy Father will give his 'Urbi and Orbi' blessing," said the statement.

The Vatican said Monday that John Paul II's improving health means he should be out of hospital in less than two weeks, in time for Easter week celebrations.

"We think that he will be at the Vatican for Holy Week," Vatican spokesperson Joaquin Navarro-Valls had told reporters.

Speaking on the 11th day of the Pope's hospitalization, he gave no precise date for his discharge from Rome's Gemelli Polyclinic.

Doctors have warned the head of the Roman Catholic Church to limit the use of his voice to help him recuperate better after they inserted a tube in his windpipe to ease breathing following a bout of the flu.

The Pope also suffers from Parkinson's disease, a neurologic disorder which impairs his speech.

Holy Week ceremonies start on March 20 with a celebration in Saint Peter's Square at 10 a.m. presided by Cardinal Camillo Ruini, the pope's vicar (deputy) in the Rome diocese.

The following Thursday a Mass will be celebrated by Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re, head of the bishops' congregation, in Saint Peter's Basilica at 9:30 a.m.

In the evening the ceremony evoking the Last Supper of Christ will be concelebrated by cardinals, bishops and other clergy and led by Cardinal Alfonso Lopez Trujillo, head of the papal council for the family. *AFP*

King Tut not murdered, tests show

CAIRO—King Tut wasn't murdered by a blow to the head, nor was his chest crushed in an accident. But even after ruling out such fabled theories, the most revealing tests ever performed on boy pharaoh's mummy failed to resolve the mystery of how he actually died.

The results of the high-tech CT scan, released Tuesday, raised one new possibility: It appears Tut broke his left thigh severely—puncturing his skin—just days before his death, the CT scan suggested, and that could have caused an infection.

But the Egyptian-led team that poured over 1,700 CT images taken of Tut's body two months ago was split over that theory, with some saying the fracture came when the mummy was discovered in 1922 in Luxor's Valley of the Kings. Tut could have died of natural causes or even have been poisoned, Egyptian antiquities director Zahi Hawass said.

Still the CT results provided the most revealing insight yet into the life of ancient Egypt's most famous king, who ruled 3,300 years ago.

Tutankhamun was a well-fed, healthy, yet slightly built 19-year-old, standing 5 feet 6 inches tall, at the time of his death, the results suggested. It was the first time his age at death has been established.

He had the typical overbite characteristic of other kings from his family and a slight cleft palate, which did not cause the appearance of a hair-lip or other facial deformities. He also had large incisor teeth and his lower teeth were slightly misaligned.

While much interest has surrounded Tut's life, most attention has focussed on how he died. X-ray tests performed on Tut in 1968 by Liverpool University anatomists found bone fragments inside his skull, suggesting a blow to the back of his head may have killed him. *AP*

Commemorative Charles-Camilla postage stamps

LONDON—Photos of Prince Charles and his bride-to-be Camilla Parker Bowles grace a set of royal wedding commemorative postage stamps unveiled by Britain's Royal Mail on Wednesday.

Britons will have a choice of two Charles-and-Camilla commemorative stamps which will go on sale at British post offices from April 8—the couple's wedding day.

A 30 pence (57 US cent) stamp features a profile of the couple looking relaxed and laughing heartily, while a 68 pence ($1.30) stamp, commonly used for posting letters overseas, shows Charles and Camilla in a formal pose.

The photographs, which have been approved for use on the stamps by Queen Elizabeth II, Charles' mother, were taken in Scotland at the queen's Balmoral estate and at a highland games meeting in the country's north.

The Royal Mail's head of special stamps, Julietta Edgar, said the postal authority had issued commemorative stamps marking royal occasions for several decades.

"These stamps have long been recognized as one of the most prestigious, popular and enduring ways of marking such moments in our lives..." Edgar said. *AP*

ITALIAN President Carlo Azeglio Ciampi and his wife Franca Pilla, standing at center, look at Rosa Maria Calipari, widow of late Italian intelligence officer Nicola Calipari, touching the coffin during her husband's state funeral in Rome Monday. AP

Italy demands justice from US over Iraq death

ROME—Italy's foreign minister rejected on Tuesday a US account of how its forces killed an Italian intelligence agent in Iraq and urged Washington to punish any soldiers found guilty of wrongdoing in the shooting.

"It is our duty to demand truth and justice," Foreign Minister Gianfranco Fini told parliament.

Agent Nicola Calipari has been hailed as a hero in Italy after he died shielding a newly freed hostage from US gunfire as they drove to Baghdad airport last Friday.

The killing has strained ties between the United States and Italy, which has been one of President George W. Bush's staunchest allies in Europe over the war in Iraq.

The United States invited Italy on Tuesday to participate in an already-announced military inquiry into the incident, a move immediately welcomed by Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi. The investigation, which will also review procedures at military checkpoints in Iraq, aims to be finished within 3-4 weeks.

"Together with the Italians, we will get to the bottom of this and get to know all of the facts together. That's what's important now," said state department spokesperson Richard Boucher.

Fini dismissed speculation that US forces deliberately fired on the Italians, but he said an initial US military statement on the shooting, released hours after the attack, did "not coincide" with what Italy believed had happened.

"It was certainly an accident," Fini said.

"But this doesn't mean, in fact it makes it necessary, to demand that events are clarified ... to identify those responsible, and if people are to blame then to request and ensure that the guilty parties are punished," he added.

The US military has said its soldiers fired on the Italians' car after it approached a checkpoint at speed and failed to heed signals to slow down.

But Fini said that the Italians had been driving slowly and had received no warning. Moreover he said that Italy had made "all necessary contacts" with US authorities to facilitate entry to the airport.

He added that immediately after the shooting, US soldiers had apologized profusely to freed hostage Giuliana Sgrena and an unnamed Italian intelligence officer who survived the fire. *Reuters*

UN supports US plea for total ban on human cloning

UNITED NATIONS—The UN General Assembly on Tuesday urged governments to ban all human cloning, including the cloning of human embryos for stem-cell research, in a divided vote that handed a symbolic victory to the administration of US President George W. Bush.

Capping four years of contentious debate, the 191-nation assembly voted 84 to 34, with 37 abstentions, to approve a nonbinding statement on cloning.

The United States did not play a public role in promoting the statement. But it had worked behind the scenes, hand-in-hand with US anti-abortion groups, to obtain a call for a blanket ban on all cloning.

"The United States and the international community have now spoken clearly that human cloning is an affront to human dignity," Bush said in a statement welcoming the "strong vote."

The measure was proposed by Honduras and generally supported by predominantly Roman Catholic countries, in line with Pope John Paul's condemnation of human cloning. It was generally opposed by nations where stem-cell research is being pursued.

Unusually, the United States and Britain, traditional staunch allies in the United Nations, were on opposite sides of the issue, and Britain condemned the "intransigence" of nations opposed to cloning for medical reasons.

Many Islamic nations were among those abstaining, on grounds there was no UN consensus on the hot-button issue of whether stem-cell research was a valid medical pursuit or the destruction of human life.

Opponents said the text was not legally binding and would have no impact on their scientists' pursuit of stem cell research.

At the heart of the debate was so-called therapeutic cloning, in which human embryos are cloned to obtain stem cells used in medical studies and later discarded.

Many scientists, backed by governments including Belgium, Britain, Singapore and China, say the technique offers hope for a cure to some 100 million people with such conditions as Alzheimer's, cancer, diabetes and spinal cord injuries.

But the United States, Costa Rica, Italy and anti-abortion groups argued that this type of research, for whatever purpose, constitutes the taking of human lives.

The UN debate began with a 2001 proposal by France and Germany for a binding global treaty banning the cloning of human beings, a plan that had broad international backing.

But that effort failed last year after the Bush administration fought to broaden the ban to all cloning of human embryos, including therapeutic cloning.

The assembly's treaty-writing legal committee, deeply divided, abandoned the idea of a treaty and decided instead to pursue a nonbinding declaration.

Costa Rican Ambassador Bruno Stagno Ugarte praised the assembly vote as "a historic step" that recognized "that therapeutic cloning involves the creation of human life for the purpose of destroying it."

US envoy Sichan Siv made only a brief comment welcoming the statement.

But British Ambassador Emyr Jones Parry, who voted "no," lamented "the intransigence of those who were not prepared to recognize that other sovereign states—after extensive dialogue and due democratic process—may decide to permit strictly controlled applications of therapeutic cloning." *Reuters*

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35 corpses, shot and beheaded, found in Iraq

BAGHDAD—Security forces found 35 corpses—some shot to death, others beheaded—in western Iraq and south of the capital, police said Wednesday.

In Baghdad, a suicide bomber detonated a garbage truck packed with explosives outside the agriculture ministry and a hotel used by Western contractors, killing himself and at least three others, officials said.

Elsewhere, guerrillas struck a police patrol with a roadside bomb in the southern city of Basra, killing one policeman and wounding three more, Lt. Col. Karim Al-Zaydi said.

Twenty of the corpses were found late Tuesday in a field near Rumana, a village about 20 km east of the western city of Qaim, near the Syrian border, police Capt. Muzahim al-Karbouli said.

Each of the bodies had been riddled with bullets—apparently several days earlier. They were found wearing civilian clothes, al-Karbouli said. The dead included one woman.

South of Baghdad in Latifiya, Iraqi troops on Tuesday made another gruesome discovery, finding 15 headless bodies in a building inside an abandoned former army base, defense ministry Capt. Sabah Yassin said.

The bodies included 10 men, three women and two children. Their identities, like the others found in western Iraq, were not known.

Yassin said some of the dead men in Latifiya were thought to have been part of a group of Iraqi soldiers who were kidnapped by insurgents in the area two weeks ago, Yassin said.

Wednesday's truck bombing in central Baghdad shook nearby buildings in the heart of the capital, injuring dozens of people and covering a huge swath of sky with acrid black smoke.

Volleys of automatic weapons fire could be heard before and after the explosion.

Police said a group of insurgents wearing police uniforms first shot dead a guard at the Agriculture Ministry's gate, allowing the truck to enter a compound the ministry shares with the adjacent Sadeer hotel. Guards in the area then fired on the vehicle, trying to disable it before it exploded.

As a pair of US attack helicopters circled overhead, ambulances retrieved the wounded.

Officials at al-Kindi hospital said at least three dead and eight wounded were taken there. Ibn al-Nafis hospital counted at least 27 wounded, said Dr. Falleh al-Jubouri.

The truck blew up in a parking lot. Several burning vehicles were in flames and around 20 cars were damaged. The blast also shattered windows in the roughly 10-story hotel and the smaller ministry, but caused no serious structural damage to the buildings.

US troops arrived at the blast site afterward, and a few stood with dozens of onlookers at the edge of a debris-strewn crater 10 meters across and two meters deep.

The violence came a day after the US military announced it was speeding up an inquiry into the shooting death of an Italian agent killed Friday by US troops at a Baghdad checkpoint—a friendly fire incident that has strained relations with Italy, a key American ally. The agent was escorting Italian journalist Giuliana Sgrena to the airport just after insurgents freed her.

Also Tuesday, the military opened a separate inquiry into the shooting of a Bulgarian soldier who Bulgarian officials believe may have been killed accidentally by coalition troops.

Both probes are an indication of the pressure being brought on the United States by the few American allies in Europe that have steadfastly supported US involvement in Iraq.

The shooting that killed Italian intelligence officer Nicola Calipari and wounded Sgrena, a 56-year-old journalist for the left-wing Il Manifesto newspaper, angered Italians and rekindled questions about the country's involvement in Iraq.

In Bulgaria, the death of Pvt. Gardi Gardev made the country's presence in Iraq an issue ahead of general elections in June. Opinion polls showed a growing majority of Bulgarians oppose the deployment. The opposition party has promised a withdrawal if it wins the election.

Italy sent 3,000 troops to Iraq, while Bulgaria has 460 here. Both countries have said they will not withdraw their troops, but domestic pressure to bring them home is growing.

In Rome, Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi's office said the premier had "expressed the satisfaction of the Italian government" at the accelerated US military investigation. Friendly fire investigations typically take months.

US President George W. Bush called Berlusconi on Friday and promised a full investigation into the attack, which took place after nightfall as the car carrying Sgrena, Calipari and two other agents approached Baghdad airport. Another agent also was wounded. *AP*

ETHIOPIAN paleontologist Yohannes Haile Selassie shows a bone of the world's oldest biped skeleton to be unearthed so far, dating to between 3.8 and four million years old. AFP

Scientists find man's earliest walking ancestor

ADDIS ABABA—A team of US and Ethiopian scientists has discovered the fossilized remains of what they believe is humankind's first walking ancestor, a hominid that lived in the wooded grasslands of the Horn of Africa nearly 4 million years ago.

The bones were discovered in February at a new site called Mille, in the northeastern Afar region of Ethiopia, said Bruce Latimer, director of the Cleveland Museum of Natural History in the US state of Ohio. They are estimated to be 3.8-4 million years old.

The fossils include a complete tibia from the lower part of the leg, parts of a thighbone, ribs, vertebrae, a collarbone, pelvis and a complete shoulder blade, or scapula. There is also an anklebone which, with the tibia, proves the creature walked upright, said Latimer, co-leader of the team that discovered the fossils.

The bones are the latest in a growing collection of early human fragments that help explain the evolutionary history of man.

"Right now we can say this is the world's oldest bipedal (an animal walking on two feet) and what makes this significant is because what makes us human is walking upright," Latimer said. "This new discovery will give us a picture of how walking upright occurred."

The findings have not been reviewed by outside scientists or published in a scientific journal.

Leslie Aiello, an anthropologist and head of the Graduate School at University College in London said, however, that the new finds could be significant.

"It sounds like a significant find, ... particularly if they have a partial skeleton because it allows you to speculate on biomechanics," Aiello, who was not part of the discovery team, told The Associated Press by telephone from Britain.

Paleontologists previously discovered in Ethiopia the remains of *Ardipithecus ramidus*, a transitional creature with significant ape characteristics dating back as many as 4.5 million years. There is some dispute over whether it walked upright on two legs, Latimer and Aiello said.

Scientists know little about A. ramidus. A few skeletal fragments suggest it was even smaller than *Australopithecus afarensis*, the 3.2 million-year-old species widely known by the nearly complete "Lucy" fossil, which measures about 1.2 meters tall.

Scientists are yet to classify the new find, which they believe falls between A. ramidus and A. afarensis. The fossils would help "join the dots" between the two hominids, said Yohannes Haile-Selassie, an Ethiopian scientist and curator at the Cleveland Museum of Natural History as well a co-leader of the discovery team. *AP*

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China paves way for 'legal' attack on Taiwan

BEIJING—China Tuesday lifted the veil on a much-anticipated antisecession law which will give its military the legal basis for attacking Taiwan, prompting the island to warn peace in the region is under threat.

War might be the only option left for China's decision makers if all other avenues to get Taiwan back are exhausted, according to Wang Zhaoguo, vice chair of the National People's Congress, or parliament.

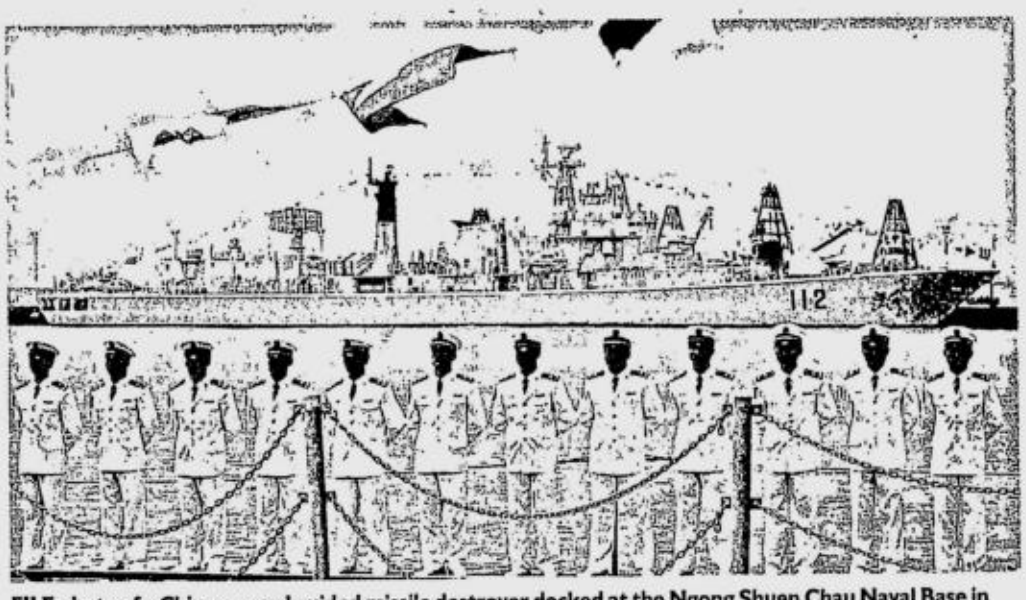
"Using non-peaceful means to stop secession in defense of our sovereignty and territorial integrity would be our last resort when all our efforts for a peaceful reunification prove futile," he told lawmakers in Beijing.

He said the bill, which is expected to be passed on Monday, provides for the use of force "in the event that the Taiwan independence forces should act under any name or by any means to cause the fact of Taiwan's secession from China."

China's military might could also come into play if "major incidents entailing Taiwan's secession from China should occur or (if) peaceful reunification should be completely exhausted."

Details of the law were not announced, but China made clear it had not yielded an inch from its insistence to retake Taiwan, which has been governed separately since the end of a civil war in 1949.

"Reunifying the motherland is the wish of all the Chinese people and is a task handed down through tens of thousands of generations," Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing told reporters.



FILE photo of a Chinese naval guided missile destroyer docked at the Ngong Shuen Chau Naval Base in Hong Kong in April last year. REUTERS

Taiwan responded by lodging the "strongest protest" against China's "malicious threats."

"The law exposes China's attempts to annex Taiwan by the use of force and to dominate the region. It's like issuing a blank check to its military," said Chiu Tai-san, vice chair of Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council.

Wang said China's basic policy remains "peaceful reunification and one country, two systems," referring to the formula under which Hong Kong has been governed since its return from British rule in 1997.

"The one country, two systems formula not only embodies the principled position of achieving national reunification and safeguarding sovereignty and territorial integrity," he said.

"It also allows a high degree of flexibility by taking into account Taiwan's past and present circumstances."

Taiwanese President Chen Shuibian has stated he does not consider the "one-country, two-systems" solution appropriate for the island.

The formula allows Hong Kong a high degree of autonomy, but critics have said it gives Beijing undue influence in the city. Ironically, it was originally coined with Taiwan in mind.

Lawmakers from Taiwan's hardline pro-independence Taiwan Solidarity Union (TSU) Tuesday threatened to launch a referendum on "one side, one country," meaning each side of the Taiwan Straits is to be considered a sovereign nation.

"President Chen should hold a 'defense referendum' when China passes the bill, otherwise the TSU will kick off a signature drive to push for a vote on 'one side, one country,'" said TSU lawmaker Lo Chih-ming.

The antisecession legislation has sparked concern it could end the "strategic ambiguity" over Taiwan's status that has ensured decades of peace in the Taiwan Strait.

Last month, the United States and Japan jointly issued a statement which described Taiwan as a common security issue amid China's military buildup. *AFP*

Hi-tech Taiwan no military pushover

BEIJING—China is steadily building up its military forces, but any armed action against Taiwan would still be a major gamble.

The 2.5 million-member People's Liberation Army is the world's largest fighting force, but its hardware is outdated, its soldiers poorly trained and underpaid and its command structure is struggling to adapt to sophisticated modern warfare.

Facing it is the much smaller, high-tech Taiwanese forces, equipped with American and French fighter jets, cutting-edge stealth warships, and Patriot missile defenses. Any invasion force would also have to contend with the 160-km wide Taiwan Strait and its massive tidal shifts, powerful winds and heavy seas.

Add to that the strong possibility of intervention by the United States, Taiwan's chief weapons supplier, which is required by US law to treat all threats to the island as a matter of "grave concern"—phrasing that leaves open the possibility of military involvement but doesn't guarantee it.

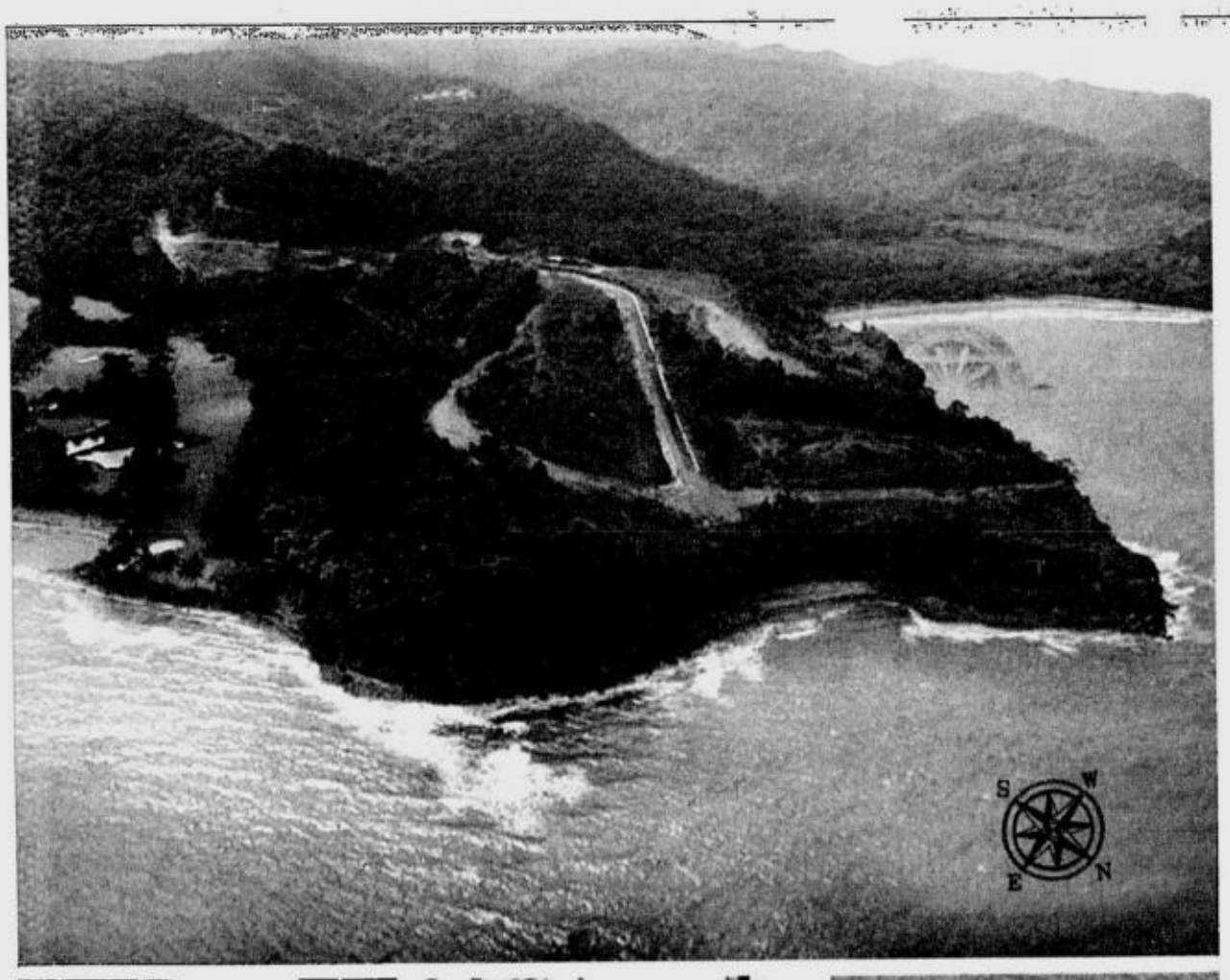
Those factors make Chinese success against Taiwan uncertain, although China has been working hard in recent years to boost its chances. Observers say rapid advances may have already tipped the balance in Beijing's favor, though not overwhelmingly so.

The awesome display of superior military technology put on by US forces during the 1991 Gulf War shocked Chinese military planners and spurred a massive modernization drive.

China has ordered billions of dollars (euros) in big ticket items from Russia, including about 130 highly advanced SU-27 and SU-30 fighter-bombers. The navy received Kilo class diesel submarines, and Sovremenny destroyers equipped with Sunburn anti-ship missiles designed to target the US fleet's most advanced vessels.

The 600-700 ballistic missiles positioned along the coast facing Taiwan are also among China's most potent weapons, with the potential to sow panic among the population and knock out key military and economic installations.

China has also focused on refining its manpower, cutting hundreds of thousands of troops while improving pay and training. The PLA has worked hard to attract top minds in science and technology for its missile, electronic warfare and computer logistics programs. *AP*



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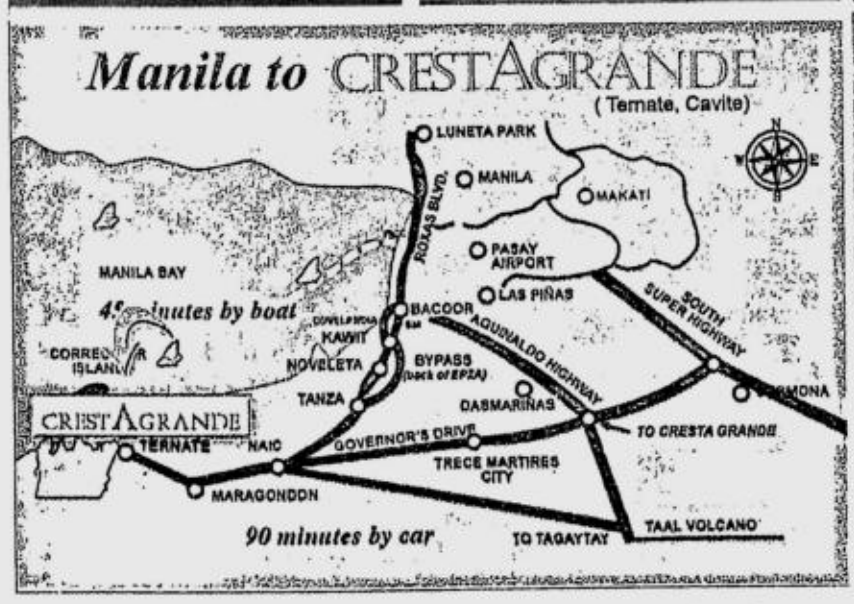

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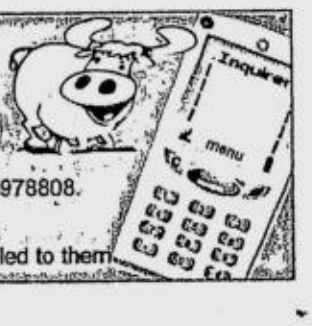

SPRING FEVER
A Chinese security guard stands near a giant Chinese character "Spring" at a housing complex in Beijing Wednesday. After a prolonged winter, rising temperatures signaled the arrival of Spring. AP

Top Sino judge vows to heed angry public

BEIJING—Flooded with mounting complaints of corruption and official abuses, China's top judge and prosecutor promised Wednesday to improve professional standards in the country's courts and listen more closely to the public.

In annual reports to China's parliament, they also promised to "refine" its controversial death penalty review process, but gave no explanation. China imposes the death penalty for offenses ranging from murder to nonviolent crimes such as tax evasion, and is believed to account for most of the world's executions.

China's courts often are criticized for their frequent use of capital punishment, low professional standards and interference by Communist Party officials in rulings.

The judicial system is "trying its best to raise the quality of trials so as to reduce repeated complaints" from the same person about the same case, said the report by Xiao Yang, president of the Supreme People's Court.

He called on Chinese court officials to handle complaints more swiftly, while protecting petitioners from retaliation in cases where judges themselves are the target of grievances.

Courts nationwide handled more than 4 million complaints from the general public last year, while the number filed with the Supreme Court jumped 24 percent to 147,665, he said.

Xiao didn't detail those complaints, but many involve the seizure of land by local officials, unpaid wages, embezzlement of public money and other abuses.

Courts also are concerned about repeat complainers who gather collectively to voice grievances, Xiao said. He didn't elaborate, but the government worries that rising discontent about corruption and judicial abuses could threaten communist rule.

Xiao promised more training for judges and more openness at trials.

"By raising the political, professional and moral quality of judges and their staff... we will raise the quality of trials," he said in his report.

Jia Chunwang, China's top prosecutor, also promised to improve training for local prosecutors and stepped up efforts to combat corruption and official abuses.

In an apparent effort to show that courts are giving a full airing to cases, Xiao said rulings in some 17,000 were overturned last year, though that accounted for only 0.34 percent of the total. AP

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In the same fix

EDITORIAL

THE FIRST quarter of the year isn't over yet, and already there have been two big increases in gasoline prices and three in diesel prices, bringing them to record levels. It certainly looks like we're in for a repeat of the fix in which we found ourselves during the last two years when a seemingly endless stream of oil price increases sent gasoline prices higher by P9.61 per liter and diesel prices by P8.73 per liter by the end of 2004. Not only that, the new round of oil price hikes are sure to have a ripple effect on the prices of essential goods and services—such as, electricity, water, transportation and, of course, food—which have been also soaring to all-time highs. The outlook is almost discouraging. The man on the street cannot be faulted if he feels helpless these days.

Just as infuriating is the suggestion by some quarters that Filipinos should just roll with the punches since the Philippines still has one of the lowest pump prices in the region. Energy Undersecretary Peter Anthony Abaya, for example, noting that this year's increases have been triggered by "genuine market forces," unlike the previous years' which were driven by geopolitical developments, asked the local oil industry and the public to accept these new price levels. President Macapagal-Arroyo has also said that her administration would hold on to its policy of allowing market forces to dictate the prices of oil, food and other commodities.

Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye sounded more reassuring when he said, "The government is looking at all possible options." The President has given the green light for a committee to review the oil deregulation law. She has ordered the Department of Energy to closely monitor pump prices and she has appealed to the "good sense" of the oil companies. On the other hand, Senate President Frank Drilon has proposed that the government buy back control of Petron Corp., in which it now has a 40-percent stake.

But such measures only impress the public as obsolete, impractical or long overdue rather than encouraging. They are clearly shortsighted approaches, focusing on the effect and not on the cause of the problem itself: the country's dependence on imported oil. And yet, it has been government policy, dating back to the Marcos era, to get away from this dependence. But the lip service goes on. Shall we just resign ourselves to this outrageous fortune of escalating high prices until we all drop dead?

Of course, we have serious limitations. Money, for one thing, is scarce, especially with a fiscal crisis threatening. That's why Drilon's proposed buy-back of Petron is not that simple. The review of the deregulation law has yet to take off, and at this point the committee seems to be moving like it had all the time in the world. And since it is part of its functions, we would like to presume that the DOE has been faithfully monitoring petroleum pump prices, although we are beginning to wonder why we seem to be always caught flat-footed by global oil price adjustments.

As to the "good sense" of the oil companies, there is no evidence to suspect that it exists after all these years. As Drilon put it, "They [oil companies] can deny this until they turn blue but no, they cannot convince anymore that there is no cartel."

The government may be doing something about the problem. But we do not see it going in a big way into developing and promoting fuel-saving measures and alternative sources of energy. For example, there are new technologies—some of them Filipino inventions—that could drastically reduce fuel consumption by 20 percent, if we go by the testimonies of those using them. Solar energy has proven its vast potentials. But these technologies don't seem to be getting the necessary government support to propel them beyond the pilot stage.

In contrast, Malacañang and Congress exhibited some impressive "creativity" in identifying possible sources of funds should the administration decide to preserve its share of stocks in San Miguel Corp. They have also shown uncharacteristic "political will" in legislating new tax measures. And they have gone with boundless "passion" after the Marcos Swiss deposits, the coco levy fund and, not to forget, the pork barrel.

But will the people ever see the government working half as hard to try to rein in the galloping prices of oil products? As we have pointed out earlier, it is not always the lack of money that prevent us from addressing our problems effectively. Sometimes, it is only lack of imagination.

The e-mail brigade

VIEWPOINT

Juan L. Mercado

ARE overseas foreign workers "an emerging middle class"? e-mailed an overseas Filipino worker. Interesting question, but I don't know the answer, we replied. Anyone out there seen a study on this issue so far?

But there are qualified people who know: INQUIRER's resident economists Solita Monsod and Cielito Habito, or UP School of Economics' Ernesto Pernia, among others. Perhaps, they'll address the issue soon.

Will OFWs, like the poor, be always with us? "Hearts Apart," the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines' study on migration, found that even before graduation, the majority of OFW children mull over leaving the country. Last week's round-up of Filipino workers in Malaysia shows migration streams are not subsiding. Neither are their e-mails. Here are excerpts:

From Luis Zamora in Korea: "I'm an OFW, one of those keeping the economy afloat. Yet, government can't even simplify processing of the overseas employment certificate (OEC).

"We need this P100-certificate every time one vacations or leaves. As an OFW (1985-1988; then 1993-1995, and 2002 to the present), I find the tedious OEC processing unchanged. Although more Filipinos go overseas, we find the same rude employees, same windows, same dirty toilets, etc.

"I'll [be] on vacation this May. Already I dread the long lines. Even if one files early in the morning, it takes more than half a day to finish."

From Anthony Yu: "Almost 11 years ago, armed with an Ateneo degree, I worked and did well at my job in Taipei. When news of President Fidel Ramos' reforms reached Pinoys, I felt hope and returned.

"Many ethnic Chinese are products of a much older diaspora. Younger overseas Chinese no longer see China as the motherland. These days I look at China the way all other nationalities look at it: a huge opportunity with a large competitive labor force that's also a large consumer market.

"The world is getting smaller. It's no longer a question of Pinoys against somebody else. It's now just a question of where is the best place to do anything: live, run a business, raise children, etc.

"I fear that Filipinos who've migrated will have descendants who'll become like the Taiwanese—a demographic grouping that has its own identity apart from its "motherland."

"There have been many disappointments since my return. But I can not make any claim to patriotism. Nor do I have the right to brand anyone a thief. I only want the best for this country for one reason—I happen to live here.

"This reason should spur commitment in me, and probably in others who also live here. It does not take rocket science to arrive at a conclusion as to where this country is headed.

"Exclusivity has always been the bigger sin of any country. But for our own sakes, we must pin our hopes on ourselves, not on those already packing for the next flight out."

Former Health Secretary Jaime Galvez-Tan and San Beda's Dr. Helen Santiago-Sigua have written, in the INQUIRER, on the Filipino medical diaspora. Now, Davao's Henrylito Tacio notes the debate is resounding in The Lancet, the international journal for physicians.

"Developing countries, such as the Philippines, India, and Africa, face a serious crisis in the loss of their doctors and nurses," writes Our Lady of Peace Hospital's Dr. Willie T. Ong in the March 5 issue of The Lancet.

"Because of a shortage of doctors, some government clinics are manned by midwives," former health chief, Galvez-Tan, says. "Unless something is done, (this) could lead to the collapse of the health-care system."

The Philippine Medical Association estimates that one in five doctors today is taking up nursing to "qualify" for jobs abroad. By 2010, we'll be short of 10,000 doctors.

The main reason is economic. Doctors-turned-nurses earn 10 times in the United States, Britain or Saudi Arabia more than they do here. Human rights bar a law to block this exodus. A cash-strapped government spends 3 percent of the gross national product on health.

"In response, the Philippine College of Physicians (PCP), drew up a Doctor's Covenant. It asks members to stay for at least three years after qualifying. They're to dedicate some time to charity work. This contract has no legal implications, working instead on the notion that a doctor is answerable to his own conscience."

When launched last September, half of 1,500 doctors at the PCP convention signed. Ong notes 30 percent was "undecided." And 20 percent bucked.

"The Covenant might seem inadequate, but its implications are far-reaching. PCP believes that if 2,000 doctors sign up, Filipinos are assured of specialist care in the next three years.

"Patients welcome this assurance," Ong writes. "I'd encourage doctors in other countries, especially those also affected by migration, to consider a similar initiative."

But isn't it too early to declare the covenant a "success"? The shortage of nurses overseas is projected to continue up to 2010, Dr. J. Ruiz—who returned from the United States to serve here—writes in the Philippine Journal of Internal Medicine.

Remember the nursery song: "Mother, Mother, I am sick/Call the doctor very quick"? Will the answering machine tell Mama: "The doctor is out and will get back to you—say, two years from now. Maybe never."

* * *

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Tale of two countries

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

THERE have been some changes. Years ago, you couldn't find a group of legislators to actively take up a position against the Catholic Church, particularly on family planning and women's reproductive rights. During Fidel Ramos' time, there was pretty much only Juan Flavier, then the health secretary and now a senator.

The reason for it was obvious: secretaries exist at the sufferance of their president, legislators exist at the sufferance of their voters. The Catholic Church having a tremendous influence on voters, legislators exist also at the sufferance of the Church. The Church is still able to stop candidates from winning, particularly at the district level, even if it's less and less known to get candidates to win. The Iglesia ni Cristo, El Shaddai and Couples for Christ have been more successful in the latter.

Flavier does belong right now to the current group of legislators batting for HB 3773, a bill calling for Responsible Parenthood and Population Management, which has the Catholic bishops up in arms. In the mid-1990s, he was positively brilliant, more than holding his own against Jaime Cardinal Sin. Religion might carry a lot of clout in this country, but more so humor, and Flavier stood tall in it even in his diminutive size. Wit doused hellfire, and Mr. Condom did make considerable inroads in pushing for some kind of family planning despite the chastity belt the Church put up against it.

Alas, only to see the gains pushed back, ironically under a woman President, or so if the legislators, among them two women—Risa Hontiveros and Imee Marcos—are to be believed. The "half-hearted implementation" of laws protecting women, they say, has caused domestic violence to soar to an all-time high and women's sexual health to be neglected.

I remember in this respect something a Spanish friend told me last year after seeing the staunch opposition of the local bishops to divorce, family planning, and their other favorite anathemas. Maybe, he suggested, I should look at what happened in Spain after Francisco Franco, the strongman who ruled that country for several decades. The change, he said, has been breathtaking. In but three decades after Franco's death, the Catholic Church, which has ruled Spain with as much iron fist as Franco himself did, lost much of its power and influence on the country. "This was a country that could not even contemplate divorce then. To do so was to be branded a heretic by the Church, if not a subversive by the government. And now we've had the first same-sex marriage in Europe, even well ahead of Sweden."

I **have** looked at bit at what had happened to that country after the dictatorship, and have been astounded by the changes. Not least in the arts. Almost overnight, the movies in particular experienced a renaissance, Pedro Almodovar being at the forefront of it. Almodovar's themes reflect it. In "All About My Mother," a single mother who loses her son in an accident searches for her lost husband to tell him about it, and goes through a spiritual and social journey. She rediscovers her acting talent, which liberates her completely, along with discovering that her husband has long liberated himself also by undergoing a sex change and embracing his/her preferred gender.

These are themes that could not have been aired, except in clandestine defiance, during Franco's time and before. Now they are par for the course. As—something that would shock local censors—are scenes of disrobing. Paz Vega, the current star of "Spanglish," gained fame much earlier for her bold role in "Sex and Lucia." I saw her also in "Carmen," the narrative version of the opera, which had her repeatedly in the throes of passion in all her magnificent nakedness. I did say in a column about censorship last week that convention changes.

Much of the current liberalism, or radicalism as some might call it, owes to the new minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero who has abolished all laws discriminating against homosexuals. He has implemented gender parity by having a Cabinet composed of eight women and eight men. The new government's first bill in Parliament, not quite incidentally, was increasing the penalties for domestic violence, which Zapatero called an "unacceptable evil," accounting for the death of one woman per week in Spain. Sex-change surgery will now fall under the national health plan. Interestingly, Zapatero's moves are not being done in opposition to public opinion. The polls show that more than half of Spanish citizens support gay marriages and gays adopting children.

Even well before Zapatero, the winds of change had been blowing fiercely. Six years after Franco's death, in 1981, Parliament legalized divorce and four years later legalized abortion under specified circumstances, the specifications being liberalized a year later. This was done amid ferocious Church efforts to stop it. Today, only the Opus Dei continues to defy the winds of change.

It should be interesting to explore the reasons for why these changes took place in the country that for three centuries turned us into its image and likeness. My Spanish friend himself swears it was education that did the trick. But the true answer may prove deeper and more complex than that. Quite interestingly also, the mainstream Spanish Catholic Church (the Opus Dei excepted) turned against Franco during his last years, much as the bulk of the Philippine Catholic Church (the conservative bishops excepted) turned against Marcos during his last few years. Well, the downfall of Marcos led to the ascension of Cory, who felt a monumental debt of gratitude to Cardinal Sin.

Therein lies a tale in itself. But one best told another day.

Can Senate pass the VAT bills before recess?

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

LAST Tuesday evening, I caught sight of Speaker Jose de Venecia at the Hotel Intercontinental cocktail reception given by the Israeli Embassy after the showing of the powerful Fringe Theater play about the Holocaust, "Anthology." When he left, the media buzz was that he was rushing to a one-on-one with Senate President Franklin Drilon, where they hoped to end the "word war" between the two chambers of Congress. Earlier, their subalterns met at the same hotel to pave the way. Sources said the two met for over two hours at the Makati Shangri-la Hotel, but they were not alone. With Drilon was Senate finance committee chair Sen. Manuel Villar, who earlier concocted the "surprise move" to pass the House budget *in toto*, which led to the "word war." With JDV came Villar's counterpart, Rep. Rolando Andaya Jr., and Majority Leader Prospero Nograles.

Sources say the meeting was cordial. The two sides vowed to assign "the highest political priority" to passing the two VAT bills before the March 18 recess, to help raise P80 billion in new revenues this year. They also agreed to put the 2005 budget, which should be signed by the President in the next two days, behind them and work on two other bills: one mandating the planting of two billion trees (JDV's long-pending pet bill aimed at generating jobs) and the anti-terrorism bill which the Armed Forces is pushing for. They also pledged close cooperation for the 112th Inter-Parliamentary Union General Assembly to be held in Manila from April 3 to 8.

I wonder, though, if the Senate will accede to its chief's appeal and pass the VAT bills. After that, the bills still have to be reconciled with the House version in the bicameral conference committee before the Holy Week recess. Various multilateral donors have been pressing for their passage, but it is doubtful if this could happen before the break.

* * *

It's fashionable to sound "ultra-liberal," and conversely, one sounds very naïve and unformed when one is "conservative." There's also some degree of romanticism in featuring anti-establishment stories. Recently there has been an outcry in some media outfits as well as from some members of Congress against the proposal of AFP Deputy Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Edilberto Adan to prohibit or penalize media people who allegedly allow themselves to be the "mouthpiece" of terrorists here.

Adan is one of the more articulate people in the AFP leadership today (he's about the only top officer today who speaks English painlessly, owing to the fact that he learned it from his teacher-mother at an early age), and he is no moron. He certainly knows what he's complaining about. And when he complains about how some media organizations have come to sound like spokespersons of terrorist groups, I suspect that he's voicing a frustration felt by many military officers.

* * *

Many of them feel hamstrung in their fight against dissident forces here especially on the political level, where they see left-wing forces replicating like amoeba into countless legal and above-ground organizations, but with many of them still maintaining very strong links to the armed group that remains outlawed. The frustration becomes worse when persons who admit openly to being enemies of the state are given free rein to propagandize over the airwaves. Ironically, these enemies of the state and of the democratic way of life are availing themselves of the very freedoms they never would allow if they came into power.

* * *

All of us in media come to a kind of crossroads on the issue of responsibility at some point. We ought to assess how responsible we are in the exercise of our profession. Some critics of Adan's proposal are now saying that media ought to practice self-regulation, that this principle should be the only restraint on media. But how many in the media do practice self-restraint? This question can apply not just to the liberal treatment of terrorist groups and enemies of the state, but also to the pollution of the TV lanes in violation of accepted standards of decency and fair play.

* * *

In the United States, where the bill of rights is strongly upheld, I wonder what would have happened if a major network had repeatedly aired interviews of Saddam Hussein at the height of the US-led invasion of Iraq, when US soldiers were dying? Public opinion would have been so strong against the network, even though the war has bitterly divided that country, that the network would have been boycotted out of business. I admit I envy the American public's clear thinking on issues of patriotism and nationhood. Here Gregorio Rosal twits a ranking general's proposal to curb the free access of terrorist groups to the media, even as the dissidents continue to bomb power installations, extort revolutionary taxes and kill soldiers on mercy missions during calamities. All the while, Ka Roger is accessible daily to the media via his cell phone.

* * *

President Macapagal-Arroyo has opened up to logging two areas in Mindanao that had been included in the total log ban after the calamitous floods. This includes the Surigao area where the giant logging and paper company, Picop, run by the friend of Rep. Prospero Pichay, operates. Reports say GMA is also considering opening up some areas in Luzon, owing to the strong lobby of the wood-manufacturing industry. The problem, however, is that everyone knows that the loggers, including the legitimate ones, cut trees outside their concession areas and the handful of forest rangers are helpless to stop their operations. If the President wishes to reopen areas to logging, she should beef up the security of the forests with manpower and the right equipment. Until then, the same problem of legal loggers cutting trees illegally as well as illegal ones doing the same thing will continue.

Anti-corruption ribbons, badges

HUMAN FACE

Ma. Ceres P. Doyo

A FEW weeks ago, we were high on the list of the world's happiest people. This week's news says we are No. 2 on Asia's graft and corruption list. Are we happy because we are corrupt or are we corrupt because we are happy? Okay, just kidding.

Gusto mong magkapera? (Do you want to make money?) My friend's boss called my friend to his office one day to ask her that. My friend was working in a government agency/commission that was tasked to improve the lives of many and make people live in peace and harmony.

Easy, the boss told my friend who had spent many years in NGO work before she moved to the government to try it out (she has since left). Receipts were the secret. That's not really a secret, is it?

My friend was so stunned. What came out of her mouth was a polite, "No, sir, my husband makes enough for all our needs."

Why did you give that kind of excuse or reason? I asked. She could have given a better one. My point was: having enough money or being independently rich is not a reason for not stealing. Or that low pay is a justification for being corrupt. Why, some of the most rapacious and greedy already have so much to begin with. Stealing people's money is simply wrong any way you look at it.

My friend said she was so shocked that was all she could say. Well, it must have been like meeting a flasher in a darkened alley, if you know what I mean. By the way, when confronted by one don't charge or, worse, run away. That is what gives the exhibitionist gratification. Say something that will make the coward slink away with inferiority. Like, you're not interested, then stare him down. They're generally harmless, these types. But not the exhibitionists who wear their loot in so many subtle and vulgar ways.

That friend of mine, who is rather known for her colorful language, could only say so much at that time. No, thank you.

And how would she have made money? Well, it was not even big-time, like, on multimillion contracts. But there was something to be had in supplies, events and out-of-town trips and seminars in, uhm, nice places. Arrggh, the never-ending seminars.

What really disgusted me was the fact that the agency/commission where she worked was tasked to alleviate the plight of the poor and the neglected. Oh my God, I thought, all that money that was poured in there does not entirely go to the beneficiaries after all. So much goes to the perks of the bureaucracy and, worse, some of it goes to ghost expenses. There's just so much people's money wasted.

Always, anti-corruption advocates point to the big fish who take home the big loot and scandalize their subordinates. The corruption landscape is easy to picture, the solution easier said than done. Clean up the top and the bottom will follow?

A good number of squeaky-clean, top-level government bureaucrats have come and gone but the graft-ridden bureaucracy lives on. There is a lot going on in the middle-level which is hard to shake down.

But, of course, there were big ones who stole in a grand way, the big-time plunderers who will never get to feel what it's like to be strapped to the gurney like that rapist whom I watched die by lethal injection. But while there is great sense in keeping an eye on the big bosses, it would also be good to work on the small fry who know the nuts and bolts and who will themselves go up the ladder.

So why not try it the other way around? The small fry should give a good example to the bosses. If they are well-organized, if they know they have the support of the people they serve, if they realize they can't get away with robbery and theft because their peers are watching, this sector in the bureaucracy might be able to set the standard for their bosses.

We focus so much on the individuals and we really feast on the big ones who get caught red-handed. We could even feel sorry for the "smaller" ones who stole just a few grands but went to prison. But bigger than all of these corrupt big and small individuals combined is the culture of corruption that thrives. It is like a slimy body of water that gives life to vermin and a host of harmful organisms. That water has to be flushed out or changed.

Do I sound like a Girl Scout? Well, I was a Girl Scout. My badge was a badge of honor. And one of the things that I remember, aside from "Be prepared" is "Do a good turn daily." I believed, with my small heart, that the world could be better if each one did that. There are good things we will always remember.

And so why don't we make people always remember? Is there something that would remind those who work in the government and for the people that they are to be trusted, that they are to be honest? That we look to them to erase the curse of *pangungurakot*?

What about ribbons and stickers and badges and buttons? There is a ribbon color for every movement—purple for women against violence, red for AIDS, etc.

Some people might find wearing anti-corruption thingamajigs a very self-righteous, holier-than-thou practice. I say, the corrupt strut about in signature clothes and ride away to the sunrise in their SUVs, while the upright must hide in humility? The latter is false humility that embolden the hardened sticky-fingers.

Incidentally, a group of Cebu NGOs came up with a booklet titled "Homily Guide on Corruption" which priests and preachers could use. Great. Surely many corrupt officials are also church-goers.

* * *

Send comments to cerespd@info.com.ph

Passing the buck

THE LONG VIEW

Manuel L. Quezon III

THAT the military has failed to capture Gregorio Rosal, spokesman of the CPP-NPA, is not the fault of media. It is the fault of the military and the police. The fact that there are certainly active members of the Communist Party, or people so sympathetic to its aims as to be routinely hostile to the government in every way they can, is irrelevant, as well. If nations have the right of self-defense, just as people do, they also have the right of self-determination, just as individuals have free will. For this reason, we have the current situation of members of the military and the government wanting to punish media people for interviewing the enemies of the state, while the citizens (including media people) of the state resist the demands for a punitive policy against journalists.

The zealot, the person willing to cut corners and do everything in the name of their cause, is the biggest enemy of whatever ideals he thinks he represents. This applies as much to Muslims who bomb in the name of a dreamed-off independent Muslim Mindanao, as it does to communists who ambush and extort money in the name of the masses, as it does to politicians and soldiers who want to lock up (if not torture and kill) in defense of "national security." In the face of terrorism, those against it think the only way to prevent it is through terror—such as fear of prosecution and punishment.

Obviously what rebels and the military have in common is fear. They are ruled by it. It is the glue that holds their organizations together, and which motivates them in fighting their enemies. The military is less competent in using fear because of corruption and a corresponding lack of resources devoted to morale-building and training. The defects and weaknesses of the society which rebels are up in arms against are more glaringly obvious, and more corrosive in their effects, on the military than in rebels such as the communists or Muslim fundamentalists or separatists. The remarkable thing is that for all its weaknesses, society has enough strength to at the very least, restrict the effects of rebellion to prevent the defeat of the state.

In conscious or subconscious homage, however, to its enemies, the military tends to imbibe the mind-set of its opponents, which only serves to strengthen the hand of those it is fighting. This is why you have half-educated officers mounting coups, sapping the will and effectiveness of the Armed Forces, sabotaging the economic viability of the state and eroding the relevance of its civilian political institutions. The dog that bites the hand that feeds it not only reduces the ability of the person feeding it by 50 percent, it demonstrates the unfitness of the dog for either continued care or affection. The soldier who mounts a coup betrays his unfitness to be a soldier. Perhaps he may demonstrate fitness for senatorial office but not much else.

For all the defects of the present order, it is the order preferred by the majority, who would rather muddle through within its limitations, rather than risk being subjected to the messianic missions of those who claim to know better. This is the greatest strength of the government, of the military and of the citizenry, which may not particularly like democracy as we practice it, but prefers it to the uncertainties of a dictatorship by politicians, soldiers or revolutionaries. While it doesn't say much that we are trapped between the stupidity and avarice of mainstream politicians, officials and businessmen, and the ruthless, cold-bloodedness of revolutionaries whether spouting Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought or a particular interpretation of the Koran, time and again the public has voted with its feet to either live with the stupidity at home, or seek brighter prospects at the hands of perhaps slightly less obviously stupid foreigners abroad.

Simply put, the job of government, in the face of rebellion and terrorism, is to protect the public from the worst effects of the fighting, and to pursue policies that will defeat rebels and terrorists by depriving them of the means and justification for waging war. How this is done is something the politicians and the generals should do, subject to the ultimate control of the public, which gets to vote governments in and out of office, presumably on the basis of how well or badly they are performing. The job of the citizenry is to support the government with taxes and cooperation when the government behaves, and to avoid feeding the beast when government fails to do its business. The job of rebels, of course, is to rebel and pursue all means, fair or foul, to overturn the system, while terrorists are interested in bloodshed and mayhem. The job of the media? To report on how well or badly the government is doing, how things affect the public, and who, exactly, is up to what in the gray and black area beyond the pale of the law.

Officials can always say the state has all sorts of inherent powers and privileges when it comes to regulating the media. But to become fixated on power is to fail to understand how power is best utilized. The general or politician who condemns those who transmit the statements of his enemies only reveals how impotent and ineffectual he is. If the Abu Sayyaf blows up a bus, it is revealed as a nakedly terrorist organization. When the government threatens to lock up journalists who simply interview members of the Abu Sayyaf willing to take on the stigma of murdering innocent civilians, then it's headed down the road that leads to only one place: the one that convinces people that there is no difference between the terrorists and those they are up against. When that happens, the terrorists win.

* * *

Comments welcome at www.quezon.ph

Passing through

"All this talk of gettin' old, it's gettin' me down, my love like a cat in a bag waiting to drown, this time I'm comin' down..."
—The Verve

YOUNG BLOOD

Allan Christopher R. Beltran

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the twentysomething and below.—Ed.

YOU know you're getting older when you read that the poster girl of your generation has been reduced to shoplifting at posh clothes shops, not because she really needs the dresses, but because she's desperately looking for a cause for her rebellion. When the most promising youth of your generation becomes a cautionary tale of unfulfilled potential, you know it's time to grow up. Or to try to.

My best friend knew he was growing older when, anticipating a gang fight, he overheard one of his buddies, who was once the most *takawgulo* among his *barkada*, mumble (probably half-consciously), "*Sana walang dumating.*"

"Well, I am in law school!" he thought later, when nobody came.

As for me, I've been in school for, like, forever. In fact, I've been in college longer than the years I spent in kindergarten, elementary and high school put together.

Jack Kerouac used the word "stultified" to describe how he had ridiculously overstayed at Columbia University. But at least, he had the guts to finally leave and chase his vision of greatness. But me, I am stuck here, too smart to go down but too chicken to quit, confronted by my own mortality and historical insignificance.

I remember something a former teacher said in class, about the young and idealistic and those whose minds are deteriorating. She began by saying, "Even if we don't realize our ideals..." I have forgotten the rest, but it didn't sound promising. She meant that we all learn to compromise and we should compromise. She was a good teacher, the kind that could qualify as my favorite teacher. But she left my school, like all the good ones do eventually.

Once I saw an old buddy at the school gate, and the first thing he asked was if I was enrolled again. I told him, "I'm just passin' through, man."

I don't know why I said that. Maybe I was too embarrassed to be seen where I didn't want to be, doing exactly what I swore I would never do again. Maybe I was too proud to admit that I could go down in defeat, like everyone else or that I had gotten bogged down by the system. I don't know. But lately I find myself blaming my stupid beliefs. I guess I'm only now learning the virtue of compromise.

I would like to believe it's like reincarnation where you're given another chance to redeem yourself, like you have some unfinished business. But it feels more like stumbling into some sort of cycle, and I am forced to cry out, "Oh no, not again!"

But I don't complain anymore. I feel too dissipated for youthful rebellion. I'm just trying to "pass through" now. If only the kids in school weren't 16 and so darn idealistic and naïve. (Okay, they upset me because they remind me of myself when I was their age.)

But I have made the commitment to go back and do this again. I know I am not going to get anywhere on one leg. One must make a choice and commit himself to it. Otherwise he is just wasting his time—and everyone else's.

I knew I was getting older because when our dean reprimanded me for overstaying, I didn't answer him back. I don't complain anymore. I know all about compromise.

But if this is growing up; then let me be 16 for, like, forever.

Allan Christopher R. Beltran, 28, is a fourth year Bachelor in Secondary Education student at San Pablo Colleges in San Pablo City.

Irreplaceable

Tish Martinez

A LONG time ago, in a planet called high school, I had a best friend. Although I was a freshman and she was a senior, we got along fairly well. On weekends, we would take numerous shopping trips to any mall of our fancy and eat out. We were in high school, life was fun and we had all the time to grow up. We would pig out on junk food while watching South Park and write each other every day on a notebook we shared. I was with her every day.

Idyllic, that's what our friendship was. And when you have that kind of relationship, it's easy to believe that it would go on till you're gray.

I believed in this. She believed in it, too. We even went as far as planning where to live when we had our own families so that our kids could play together and eventually become the best of friends, just like us.

Then I made the biggest mistake of my short life. I fell in love with the love of my best friend's life.

It happened suddenly. We had just met, and something simply clicked. He was too nice, too sweet and too smart to resist. Not that I really tried. I was 14 and I wanted to fall in love. And it turned out that he felt the same, too.

The only thing left to do was tell my best friend. I didn't want to, but I knew I had to tell her before she heard about it from someone else.

I was scared. Would she slap me? Call me a whore? A man stealer perhaps? But how could I steal him from her? He wasn't hers to begin with!

I reasoned and wrestled with myself for weeks. I was perpetually drifting between keeping it from her and telling her the truth. But you know what they say: "The truth hurts for a while but lies hurt forever." (I heard that from some soap opera.) I kept asking myself, "Would she ever talk to me again, after this? Would things ever be the same again?"

Finally, after chanting "*Bahala na*" over and over like some personal mantra, I gathered the courage to tell her.

She didn't say anything. She wasn't even looking at me. And I thought I could just ease my way out of it.

I started to get up but she stopped me. Then she cried.

For a while, after she graduated from high school, things were pretty much all right. But as time went on, we drifted apart. To be honest, I think she really needed to stay away from me, to heal whatever wounds I had inflicted upon her. I, on the other hand, tried to move on with my life, tried not to miss the sister I once knew.

In retrospect, it was foolish of me to think we'd ever be okay. I mean, she loved him!

And it was equally dumb of me to let my best friend go, for a boy who could be replaced. Everyone knows, you can never replace your best friend.

All these memories bring me pain. I have always believed that everything must take its course and that most of the bad things that happened were my fault alone. Not my ex boyfriend's, not my friend's, they were mine. I didn't see how much she meant to me until I had no choice but to let her slip away.

Right now, all I know is this: one, I miss my best friend; and two, it's her birthday today, which makes me miss her even more. I hope that wherever she is right now, she's happy and she doesn't hate me. And most of all, I hope that I will stop hating myself for letting myself lose her so easily.

Tish Martinez, 18, is an AB European Studies sophomore at the Ateneo de Manila University.

The problem is not just 'quantity'

THIS is in reaction to the Feb. 5 editorial, titled "Quantity over quality."

The conclusion of the British council about the quality of education in the country is already an open secret. However, its theory—that the poor quality of higher education in the country is caused by "too many colleges and universities" glosses over fundamental problems.

That the 1,380—1,428 in academic year 2001-2002—universities and colleges all over the country provide easy access to higher education is a myth. The incessant tuition and miscellaneous fee increases have made higher education elusive in the last two decades. In fact, the dropout rate in higher education is pegged at 73 percent.

The reason behind the worsening quality of education is not the "big" number of tertiary schools per se; it is the thrust of schools, particularly the privately owned, to create a lucrative business out of higher education. This point had been raised in the Swanson report four decades ago: If universities continue to concentrate on earning money, "they would be producing half-baked so-called experts and unimaginative leaders." The substandard schools that have sprouted in the last few years, offering nursing and caregiver courses, have confirmed this.

The suggested "moratorium on establishment of new colleges and universities, particularly state colleges and universities [SCUs]" is already in place (since October 1999) following the recommendations of the Presidential Commission on Educational Reform. It is important to note that the total number of public higher education institutions in the country has also been in continuous decline—from 271 in 1996 to 170 in 2002 and 111 today. These figures pale in comparison with the 1,316 private tertiary schools, which have doubled in number since 1990.

SCUs could not have been the favorite of national and local politicians; neither could they have possibly built new buildings and classrooms or upgrade their facilities as the government allotted no funding for capital outlay and drastically reduced their budgets in the last few years. In fact, government policies are even aimed at reducing the number of SCUs by 20 percent in 2010.

Reducing the issue of the deteriorating quality of education as a result of the big number of tertiary schools, specifically SCUs, is misleading. It only justifies the government's thrust, in compliance with the prescriptions of international financing institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund, World Bank and Asian Development Bank, to further reduce government spending in education and the number of SCUs.

The quality of education is in a continuous decline simply because the government does not give priority to education and has left this concern to the private sector as a profit-making enterprise.

—CARL MARC RAMOTA,
public information officer,
Anak ng Bayan Youth Party,
32-A Visayan Ave.,
Barangay San Isidro,
Galas, Quezon City

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Unfair Makati DPS

THIS is to call the attention of the concerned authorities to the complaint which I filed and was eventually dismissed by Makati's Department of Public Safety (formerly Makati Public Safety Authority).

My car (with Plate No. WKJ-552) was towed last Dec. 17, 2004 at 7:30 p.m. while it was parked on Gimenez Street in Legaspi Village, Makati City. The DPS officer, a certain Palomeno, who gave the go-signal to tow my car, said that my car was illegally parked— its rear portion, in particular, was outside the parking slot.

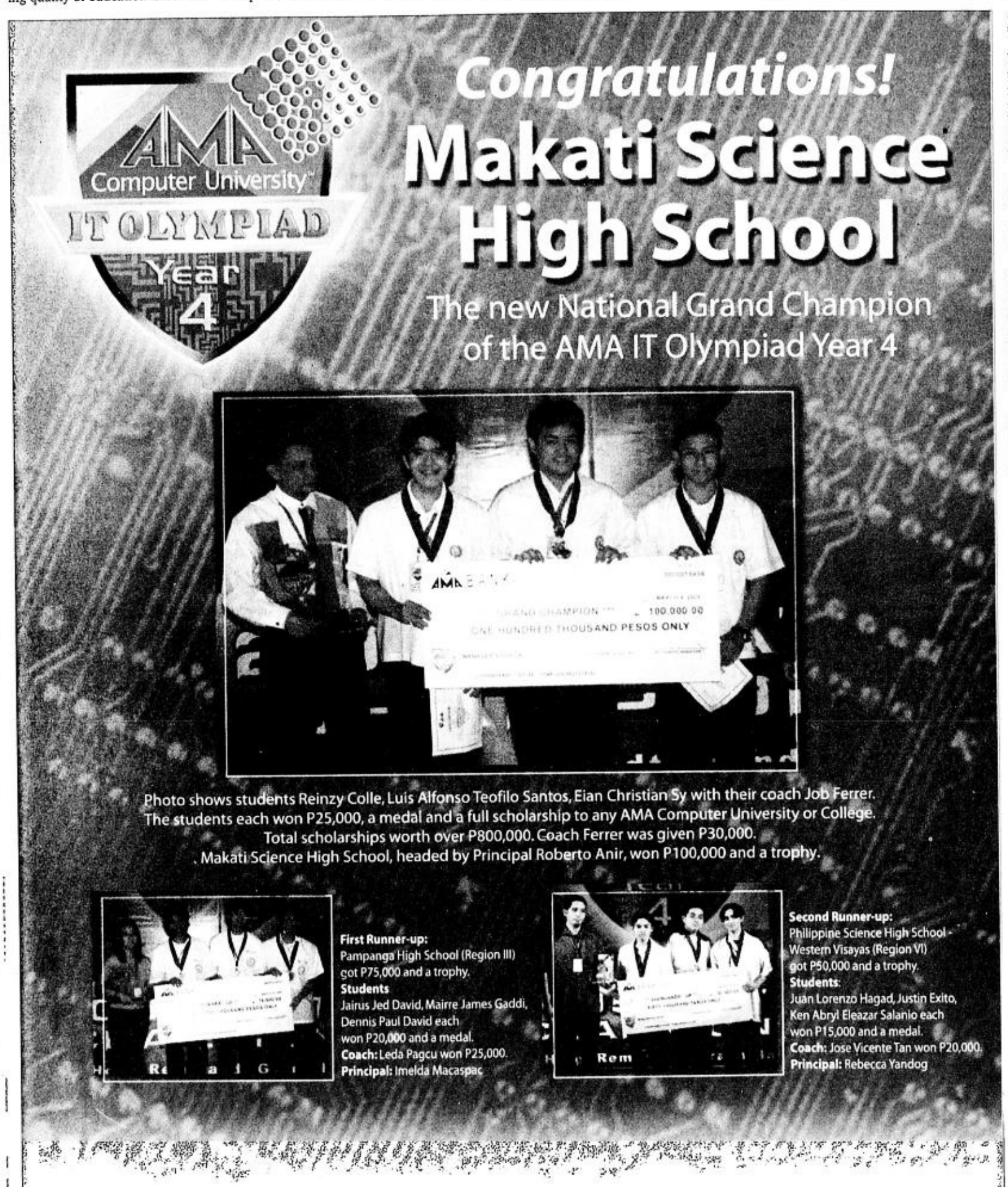
But then I could not park otherwise because a pick-up truck in the adjoining slot was already occupying a good portion of the slot that I used. And at the time I got there, it was the only slot available in the area. Anyway, I made sure that my car would not obstruct cars coming out from a building nearby.

It was grossly unfair for the DPS to tow my car. In the first place, that side of the street was a no-towing zone. Secondly, even if I was not able to park my car properly, I believe it was not enough justification for the DPS to tow my car, after all, it was not obstructing any motorist at all.

And if only to emphasize my point, Gimenez Street is practically a deserted place at that time of day, unlike the adjoining street, Salcedo Street (a towing zone after 5 p.m.).

I am not anymore after the P1,000 that I paid as fine. I just hope that the good mayor of Makati will do something to correct the impression of many motorists that these towing services are just out there to make money at the slightest perceived violation.

—ERIBERTO M. MACALOS,
ericmacalos@yahoo.com



Stop 'sharks' at our ports

I AM writing this letter to call the attention of the concerned public police officers and government officials to what is happening in Manila ports. After disembarking from a boat from Iloilo, taxi drivers came rushing and offering to bring me to my destination in their taxis but without using the meter.

I told them, "*Metro lang, ho. Bawal ang kontrata* (Let's use the taxi meter, contracting is illegal)."

One driver replied, "*Hindi ka makakakuha ng de-metro dito* (No taxi will take you on a meter run)."

As I walked toward Del Pan Street, there must have been around 10 taxi drivers who approached me, charging exorbitant fares. By just walking that short distance and taking a jeep going to España, I really saved a lot! I am also aware that jeepneys, stationed near the pier gates, charge P30 just for a ride to Divisoria, a distance that under existing laws should cost the minimum fare of only P5.50.

Good thing for me because I was born and grew up in Metro Manila. But how about our unsuspecting- brother Filipinos from the provinces? Will we allow them to be conned by sharks masquerading as drivers? This should be stopped! *Nakakahiya*!

—JUN GRAVOSO,
godlyvj@yahoo.com

Subsidize farming sector

BIOTECH crops may have the potential of helping the poor (PDI, 1/14/05) by increasing yields and crop resistance to pests and diseases. But with rising fertilizer prices (100 percent in the last two years), what good will it do?

The optimum yields of bio-engineered planting materials and hybrids are rarely realized by farmers because of failure to comply with prescribed crop production protocols. Farmers resort to traditional planting materials such as "*tinigib*" and openly pollinated varieties (OPV) because they are cheaper. The resulting low yields are the same as the yields of expensive bio-engineered seeds that are not adequately fertilized because of cost considerations.

This is the reason why despite the availability of 8 million hectares of agro-forest and agricultural lands in Mindanao, most are idle or marginally planted. It is no wonder why we have a shortfall of 1 million metric tons of corn to supply our feed mills; soybeans are almost all sourced from abroad; 90 percent of our palm oil requirements are imported; and rice self-sufficiency remains a dream.

Farmers will remain dirt poor and uncompetitive if there is little support from government by way of subsidies for farm inputs and infrastructure. Other governments are shrewdly subsidizing their farming sector; our government must do the same.

—BUTCH UMENGAN,
vice president,
Kasanyangan Mindanao Foundation Inc.,
4/F VH Wee Building,
Veterans Avenue, Zamboanga City

'Vigilante' concerns

I AM writing to express my grave concern over the alleged "vigilante" killings in Davao City. More than 320 people have reportedly been killed since 1998, and the rate of the killings has been rising year by year. Among the victims were children, many from Davao City's poorest communities. Not one of the perpetrators is known to have been brought to justice.

May I call on Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez to take urgent steps to protect all members of the community from extrajudicial executions; to conduct prompt, effective, independent and impartial investigations into the killings; and to bring those responsible to justice.

I am particularly concerned about the killing in August 2004 of local human rights defender Jacinto "Rashid" Manahan, who was murdered while on his way to a human rights forum on extrajudicial executions.

While I recognize that the authorities have a duty to protect the community from crime, this must never be at the expense of human rights. I am particularly concerned with the statements of local government officials, encouraging or condoning the killing of criminal suspects.

The effective response to crime lies with the building of a professional police force and efficient criminal justice system, equipped with adequate resources and trained to respect human rights and the rule of law.

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Across the NATION

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Nur men, Abu merge in new fighting

By Dona Z. Pazzibugan and Michael Lim Ubac

THE FIGHTING is far from over. Government troops clashed with a group of Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) renegades and Abu Sayyaf members in Barangay Laang Dakula in Parang, Sulu Tuesday.

The encounter came four days after Malacañang rejected calls for a ceasefire in military operations against followers of detained ex-MNLF chair Nur Misuari who have allied with Abu Sayyaf members under Radullan Sahiron.

Heavy fighting between members of the 35th Infantry Battalion and around 80 so-called Misuari Breakaway Group (MBG) rebels, commanded by Ahadon Adak, broke out around 3:15 p.m. Tuesday.

It lasted for more than two hours during which the military, from its tactical command post, bombarded the area with 51 rounds of 105mm Howitzers, according to reports reaching Camp Aguinaldo, the military general headquarters.

The troops came under heavy mortar fire and sniper fire from the rebels.

Reports said two soldiers were slightly wounded while the rebels are believed to have suffered heavy casualties.

Wounded Army soldiers Private First Class Alan Ahan and Private Santiago Callanggangan were airlifted to the Southern Command Hospital in Zamboanga City to recuperate.

Reports said one company from the 35th IB pursued the retreating rebels to block any possible route of escape.

"This is the first encounter since the President announced that operations should continue," Lt. Col. Buenaventura Pascual, chief of the AFP public information office, said yesterday.

He said the rebels were believed to be among those who escaped when the military overran their stronghold in Camp Karawan in Indanan, Sulu last Feb. 24.

Government troops are pursuing two groups of rebels who escaped from Camp Karawan. One group is led by Abtajel Tingkasan and Abdul Muin Sampang, while another group is led by Ahadon Adak.

Adak's force "is one of the big groups targeted by the focused fighting," Buenaventura said.

"It's a breakthrough that our troops have located Adak's group. With this encounter, I think our troops under the 35th IB inflicted major damage to the rebel group," he added.

Fresh fighting in Sulu broke out after renegade MNLF forces loyal to Misuari simultaneously attacked four military posts in the province last Feb. 6.

Since then, at least 30 soldiers have been killed and over 80 have been wounded, while at least 35,000 villagers have fled from their homes to escape the bombardment.

Last Thursday, President Macapagal-Arroyo rejected calls by civil society to halt operations and ordered the Armed Forces to continue "focused operations" against the rebels.

Followers of Misuari, who is detained in a police camp near Manila while on trial for rebellion, said they launched attacks in response to alleged Army abuses during anti-insurgency operations.

They denied links with the al-Qaida-linked Abu Sayyaf, a group the military has been trying to crush for years.

Misuari has denied a role in the clashes.

Officials said the fighting was meant to force the government to bring Misuari back to Jolo to face trial. He has been in jail since 2001 after leading a short-lived revolt that left around 100 dead.

The MNLF signed a peace pact with Manila in 1996, and Misuari was subsequently elected governor of the ARMM.

The MNLF threatened to abrogate the 1996 peace accord with the government should the military continue its military operations in Sulu.

Rev. Absalom Cervesa, spokesperson for the MNLF negotiating panel, told the House special committee on peace, reconciliation and unity that there was imminent danger that the Moros would abandon the peace agreement.

Abrogating the peace accord, which had led to the establishment of an expanded autonomous Muslim region and integration of about 7,000 MNLF soldiers to the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the national police, could signal the declaration of war against the Philippine government, said Cervesa. *With Inquirer wires*

A SOLDIER takes time to sleep before setting off for war again in Sulu. REM ZAMORA

Former Napocor head now leads efforts to keep union jobs

BAGUIO CITY—A former president of the National Power Corp. is helping the state firm's unions fight for their jobs.

Rolando Quilala, former Napocor acting president and now senior vice president of the power firm, supported three Napocor unions in asking a Quezon City court last week to restrain outgoing Energy Secretary Vicente Perez Jr. and the National Power Board from pursuing the termination of more than 300 employees.

Perez's reorganization plan schedules the termination of 370 employees, most of whom were rehired after the firm retrenched half of its original workforce in 2003.

It also abolished Quilala's position, forcing him to step down in April.

The INQUIRER tried but failed to reach Perez for comment on Tuesday. A staff member said the secretary was in Davao City.

Documents distributed by Quilala's son, Rabindranath, to local reporters on Tuesday indicated that Quilala was promised the Napocor presidency after Sen. Rodolfo Biazon Jr. junked the opposition to join the administration ticket.

According to a chronology of the elder Quilala's career in Napocor, Ms Arroyo "promised that the conversion of Senator Biazon to the administration side will trigger Quilala's appointment as regular Napocor president" in June 2002.

The chronology pointed out that the Quilalas "were assigned to convince Senator Biazon."

Rabindranath, a former Biazon aide, confirmed that President Macapagal-Arroyo made the pledge after meeting with the senator.

Rabindranath, who is now Baguio Mayor Braulio Yaranon's executive secretary, made the disclosure in a press conference here on Tuesday.

Quilala was appointed Napocor acting president on Jan. 23, 2002. His appointment expired after Rogelio Murga was named Napocor president on Dec. 10 that year.

In the meantime, Napocor drafted several reorganization plans, which were opposed by the Napocor Workers and Employees Union and the Napocor Employees Consolidated Union.

The plans were implemented under the term of Murga.

Quilala had since retired, but he was reinstated as Napocor senior vice president on Jan. 10, 2003.

After Biazon joined the administration, the Napocor board released three subsequent resolutions trimming down the firm's employee pool.

On Jan. 24, Napocor Board resolution 2005-09 fused all of the firm's vice presidential posts to a single item, and on March 5, Napocor announced Quilala's termination. *Vincent Cabreza, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

LTO steps up drive vs 'colorum' buses in Visayas

By Joey A. Gabieta
PDI Visayas Bureau

TACLOBAN CITY—The Land Transportation Office in Eastern Visayas (LTO 8) has vowed to strengthen its campaign against "colorum" (unregistered) buses entering and leaving the region for Luzon.

The crackdown came after a colorum bus, MR II Princess, which came from Catbalogan, Samar on Saturday fell into a 30-foot ravine in Pagbilao, Quezon that killed five-year-old boy Aaron Lucero and injured 44 other passengers.

Rebecca Obenieta, LTO 8 chief operations officer, said their lack of personnel and resources would not deter her office from cracking down on colorum buses.

Obenieta said a colorum bus is either a registered vehicle but was plying outside of the routes specified under its franchise or a bus that was not registered but soliciting paying passengers.

In the case of MR II Princess, which was bound for Manila when it met the incident, the LTO has no record that it had been issued a franchise to ply the Catbalogan-Manila route, Obenieta said.

Reports had indicated that the still unidentified driver of the bus escaped while the victims, who were rushed to the Jane County Hospital in Pagbilao town, were still waiting for assistance from the bus operator. The passengers, most of them Samareños, claimed the driver was over speeding.

Obenieta said that almost all major bus terminals in the region have set up checkpoints to stop unregistered buses from using their facilities. "But for some reasons, these buses (still) manage(d) to enter and leave the region loaded with passengers," she said.

Obenieta said that just for the first two months of this year, LTO 8 was able to apprehend 76 colorum buses—36 in January and 40 last month.

Last year, 816 colorum buses were apprehended by the LTO.

An apprehended colorum bus carried a corresponding penalty. For the first offense, the fine is P1,000 for the bus operator and P500 for the driver. A second offense would mean a penalty of P3,000 for the operator and P1,000 for the driver and revocation of driver's license and cancellation of registration. The LTO also impounds the bus pending payment of the penalty.

Earlier, LTO Regional Director Raul Aguilos had asked their Manila office to check buses stationed in the different Manila bus terminals as one way of stopping the proliferation of colorum buses operating in the different provinces, including Eastern Visayas.

"We call on our passengers to be extra vigilant and take some time to check the bus they were boarding whether it is registered or not. It is for their own advantage," Obenieta said.

Obenieta said passengers riding in a colorum bus who meet an accident couldn't expect any financial assistance from the bus operator.

Among the legitimate bus companies that ply the various routes in the region are the CUL Bus Line, Philtranco Bus Company and the Ultra Bus Line, she said.

Baguio raising funds for tribal peace gathering area

BAGUIO CITY—The city government is raising funds to finance a universal *dap-ay* (a gathering area among Cordillerans where they talk peace and community affairs) as a peace-building measure for the region, the city administrator's office announced on Tuesday.

Concerned that migrant Cordillerans and indigenous Filipino youths studying in Baguio can bring their tribal conflicts here, the city government believes the *dap-ay* may be the best means of containing tribal violence, said Antonio Romawac, a coordinator for the Baguio tourism office.

Romawac said most tribal conflicts turn bitter in an urban environment because the government treats tribal feuds and their violent retaliations as ordinary crimes.

"[Feuding groups] end up shouting at each other in the police stations, and things get [bloody later], but if they go to an environment they all recognize and respect, they will simmer down, and their elders can dictate what they should do [to restore peace]," he said.

The city is offering the tribes a *dap-ay* designed by artist Willy Magtibay at Burnham Park's Melvin Jones football grounds, Romawac said.

The *dap-ay* is a circular stone structure in Cordillera villages where community discussions are held.

Photographer Tommy Hafala, whose career is focused on documenting the sociological history of Cordillera communities, said most of the indigenous *dap-ays* have historical significance for brokering settlements.

Romawac said the Baguio *dap-ay* could be expanded and improved by developing its own access ways.

But to finance the region's first universal *dap-ay*, the government has revived the Cordillera Grand Festival set in April, said Nicolas Cawed, who is tasked with running the *dap-ay*. Cawed works for the city's park management bureau.

The holding of the festival was stopped in the 1980s after it drew strong criticisms from indigenous communities for displaying the indigenous peoples to Baguio's tourist crowd.

Cawed said the festival he is developing distances itself from the earlier Grand Cañao Festival because it is designed to link up the cultural rituals of various Cordillera tribes under a single *cañao* (native feast) structure.

He said the festival is influenced by a multicultural organization he developed as a *pangat* (leader) representing his family in Bontoc, Mt. Province.

The Cordillera Grand Festival will run from April 1 to 30, and will incorporate indigenous sports competitions. *Vincent Cabreza, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

Mining firms continue to explore Vizcaya ore-rich areas

By Melvin Gascon
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

BAYOMBONG, Nueva Vizcaya—Mining companies continued showing their interest in ore-rich areas in this province, with the latest entry of a firm wanting to explore gold and other minerals in three towns.

In a letter, Emiliano Alvarez, president of Batulao Mineral Corp. (BMC), informed the local government of its plan to conduct exploration activities in 4,860 hectares in six villages of Bayombong, Solano and Quezon towns.

According to its exploration and environment work programs, BMC aims to explore prospects for gold, copper, silver, lead, zinc and other associated minerals.

Assessment

"[The project intends] to assess the applied area for the possible mineralization of minerals found therein and to develop the same for the possible utilization," Alvarez said.

He said the company has allotted P6.9 million for the two-year exploration project.

The project is looking at exploration areas in the villages of Paitan (Bayombong); Quirino and Sitio Bugnay in Bagahabag (Solano); and Nalubbunan, Darubba and Caliat (Quezon), all of which straddle the Magat River here.

BMC is the latest mining company to signify its interest in the mineral resources of the province.

Climax Arimco Mining Corp., an Australian company, is working to get favorable endorsement by the host communities, while Oxiana Phils. Inc., also an Australian firm, is conducting exploration work in two separate areas.

Select audience

Documents obtained by the INQUIRER, however, showed that BMC had sent letters of notification only to the local governments of Bayombong and Solano.

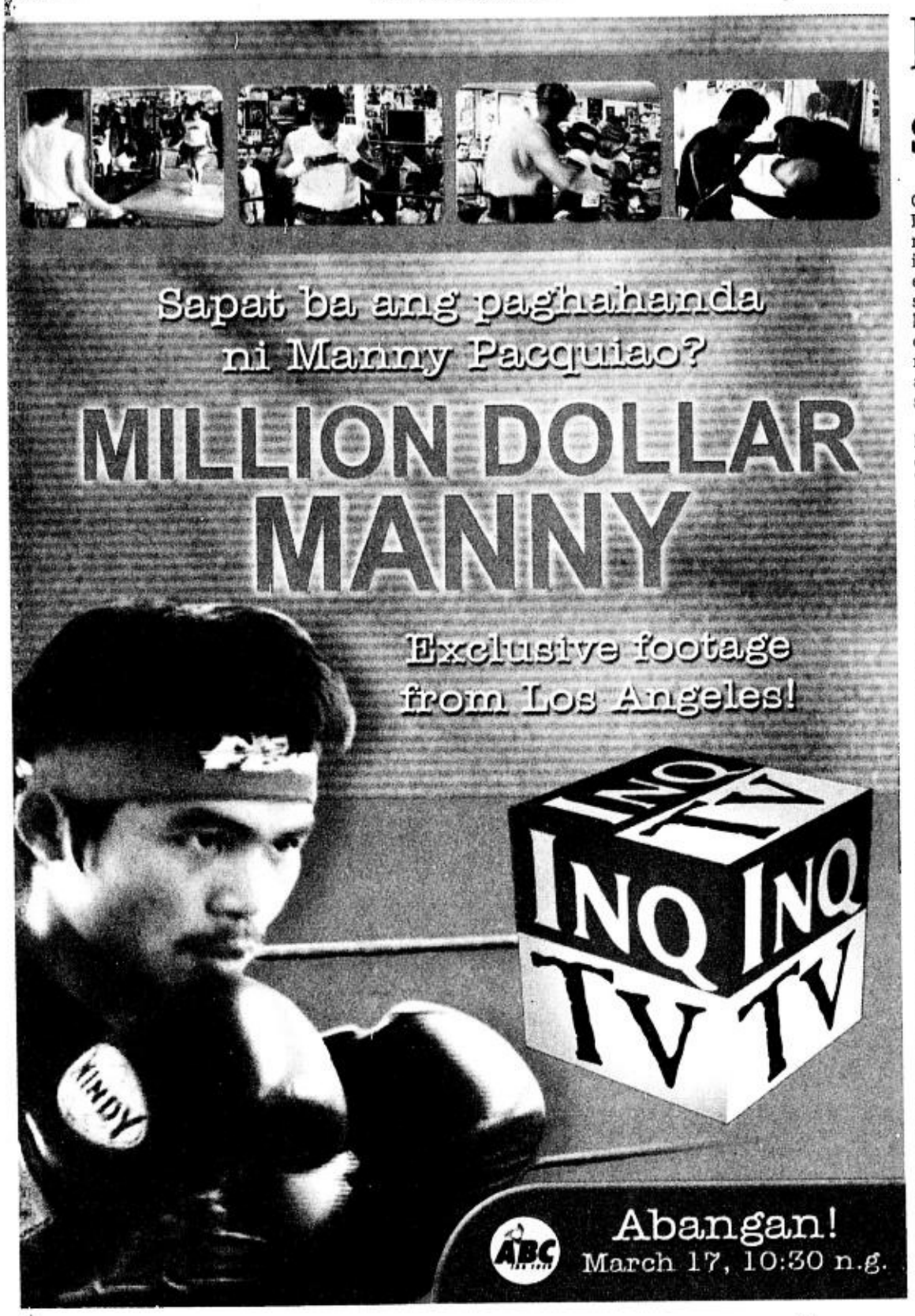
Quezon, which used to be part of Solano, was formed and proclaimed an independent town on June 18, 1961.

Acting Bayombong Vice Mayor Ronald Allan Barnacha said the local council had decided to return the application to the proponent, mainly due to the exclusion of Quezon town from the consultation process.

"It seems that [the company] used old maps in preparing its exploration plan, which would show, contrary to its claim, that it has not conducted a thorough study in the area," he said.

"We also want to be clarified why the letter was only meant to notify the local governments, and not a request for endorsement or the conduct of a public consultation," he said.

Barnacha said BMC's proposed mining operations could pose serious environmental threats to this town's residential areas.



Illegal logging reports swamp DENR-Mindoro

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo inspects a shipment of illegal lumber seized in Cebu recently. EDWIN BACASMAS/PDI PHOTO

CITY OF CALAPAN—Complaints of rampant discovery of illegal lumber in Oriental Mindoro, despite a total log ban, have swamped the office of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources here.

Juan dela Cruz, DENR-Oriental Mindoro chief, said that based on a text message sent to him by a resident, DENR personnel and members of the 204th Infantry Brigade confiscated around 2,400 board feet (235 pieces) of *lawaan* and other good lumber on Feb. 24 in an identified hot spot of illegal lumber in Villa Cerveza, Victoria town.

Dela Cruz said they arrested two suspected illegal loggers, but he refused to identify them.

He said the area was also the proposed mining site of Crew Minerals.

"They were hidden separately in cogon grass, a bamboo area and the river. The site is critical, being an ambush site," Dela Cruz said.

He said he told barangay chair Cesar Ramirez to intensify the local campaign against illegal logging.

He added that he had also instructed DENR-Occidental Mindoro officer Teodufo Ragudo to step up operations against illegal logging after receiving reports that the lumber came from Sablayan at the other side of Victoria.

Two weeks ago, the 68th Infantry Battalion impounded a jeep that it caught transporting about 900 board feet of lumber in Merit, Victoria.

Dela Cruz said that in another hot spot in Barangay Lisap, Bongabong town, there had been reports of buying of illegal lumber. But the DENR could not penetrate the place due to the presence of armed men who allegedly protect the illegal activity, he said.

Last week, he said, DENR personnel in Roxas town led by Isagani Manalili and barangay officials confiscated 400 board feet and 300 board feet of good lumber in two separate incidents.

On Feb. 26, the INQUIRER learned from Teddy Dobles, Community Environment and Natural Resources Office (Cenro)-Calapan forester, and forest ranger Ruel Magboo that they seized 268 "*kobe*" (a hardwood species) from a private lot in Barangay Tiboy, Baco.

"We declared it temporarily abandoned because no one could be identified during the investigation. We're looking for the owner," Dobles said.

He reported that six personnel from Cenro-Calapan went to Barangay Baruyan on Monday after receiving reports of cutting of "*bakawan*" (mangrove) trees.

"We're planning to conduct an IEC (information-education campaign) with civilians, DENR, Cenro, the 204th Infantry Brigade, local officials and journalists this month. We'll dialogue with the people ... explain to them. I think this will be more effective," said Dela Cruz.

He was hopeful that with the people's participation, poaching would be stopped.

"We can't do this alone," he said. *Madonna T. Virola, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

STRANDED IN PAMPANGA

Luisita strike driving 'sacadas' to hunger

BACOLOD CITY—Nineteen sugarcane seasonal workers (*sacadas*) from Candoni, Negros Occidental have been rescued from Porac, Pampanga while 11 others are expected to return home soon.

Candoni Mayor Liberty Manzano said yesterday the 30 seasonal workers—20 are from Barangay Payawan and 10 from Barangay Gatuslao—were recruited by contractor Federico Sagon of Pampanga five months ago to harvest sugarcane in Porac.

Manzano said the workers were paid regularly for two months but two weeks ago, one of the workers' wives came to her for help, claiming her husband and his companions were starving in Pampanga.

The mayor said she sought the help of Gov. Joseph Marañon who, in turn, informed Rep. Genaro Rafael Alvarez (Negros Occidental, 6th District) who facilitated the return of the seasonal workers.

By batches

Nineteen of the seasonal workers returned Sunday and another batch was expected to return soon, she said.

Manzano said she also sought the help of the Department of Social Welfare and Development to provide food for the Candoni workers who were left in Pampanga.

Sagon, when reached by cellular phone, denied he let the workers starve.

He said he had been recruiting seasonal workers from Negros Occidental during the last six years and he never had a problem with them until now.

He claimed the new batch, whom he recruited in October, had wanted to go home because they did not want to work anymore.

He said work slowed down because the sugar mill at Hacienda Luisita has closed because of the ongoing labor dispute.

"They have worked in Pampanga before, this is the first time the work slowed down because of the strike," he said.

Despite the lack of work, he maintained he continued to feed his workers.

Workers at the Hacienda Luisita continued their strike, forcing the estate's owners, the Cojuangco family, to study closing the estate's sugar operations.

Left blamed

The management of the Central Azucarera de Tarlac (CAT) accused leftist organizations of inciting the workers to go on strike.

The strike started after the CAT dismissed several workers who are members of a labor union in the sugar mill.

The union had accused the management of busting their ranks and of dismissing from work key union leaders.

But the management accused the workers of sabotaging the operations of the sugar estate, burning sugarcane and barricading the sugar mill to the detriment of other workers who wanted to continue the sugar refinery's operations. *Carla Gomez, PDI Visayas Bureau*

ROUNDUP

3.7 quake hits Bicol

LEGAZPI CITY—Another tectonic earthquake occurred in the Bicol region at 7:03 p.m., Monday. The Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology recorded the tremor at intensity 3.7 in the Richter scale. Phivolcs resident volcanologist Eduardo Laguerta said the epicenter of the quake was at 37 kilometers north and 73 degrees east of Sorsogon City. Intensity 2 was felt in Legazpi City. Two weeks ago, an intensity 5.2 tectonic earthquake occurred at the Masbate area. Phivolcs maintained Mayon's alert level 2, prohibiting anyone from scaling the volcano and approaching the 6-km permanent danger zone around the volcano.

Leo Ganace, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Cafgu member slain in Quezon

TAGKAWAYAN, Quezon—Two suspected New People's Army rebels shot dead a member of the Civilian Armed Forces Geographical Unit in Barangay Sta. Cecilia in this town past midnight on Friday. Police said Fausto V. Tirao, 45, a member of the local Cafgu unit under the Army's 76th Infantry Battalion here, was having a snack in an eatery when the unidentified armed suspects shot him several times in the body. The assailants walked casually away from the scene of the crime. Police recovered 13 pieces of empty shells and three slugs from a .45-cal. pistol.

Delfin Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

3 fishermen missing in Albay

LEGAZPI CITY—Three Albay fishermen went missing while five others were rescued after they were carried by strong currents while fishing separately in the seawaters of Rapu-Rapu and Sto. Domingo towns, both in Albay, and in Tabaco City. Reported missing were Victoriano Echemanni and Esteban and Jun-Jun Olonra, all residents of Barangay Lagundi in Rapu-Rapu town. Corazon Echemanni, relative of the victims, said they went out fishing on board the fishing boat MB Rorilyn on Friday and had not been heard of as of press time.

Job Belen, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

19 fishermen held

ORION, Bataan—Policemen and Bantay Dagat volunteers on Tuesday arrested 19 fishermen using the *buli-buli*(fine mesh net) in Manila Bay off the coast of this town. Police said the fishermen were on board the FB Jewel owned by Armando Cahanding, a businessman from Navotas, Metro Manila. They were charged with violation of fishery laws before the Bataan prosecutor's office.

Greg Refraccion, PDI Central Luzon Desk

PMA cadet dies in fall

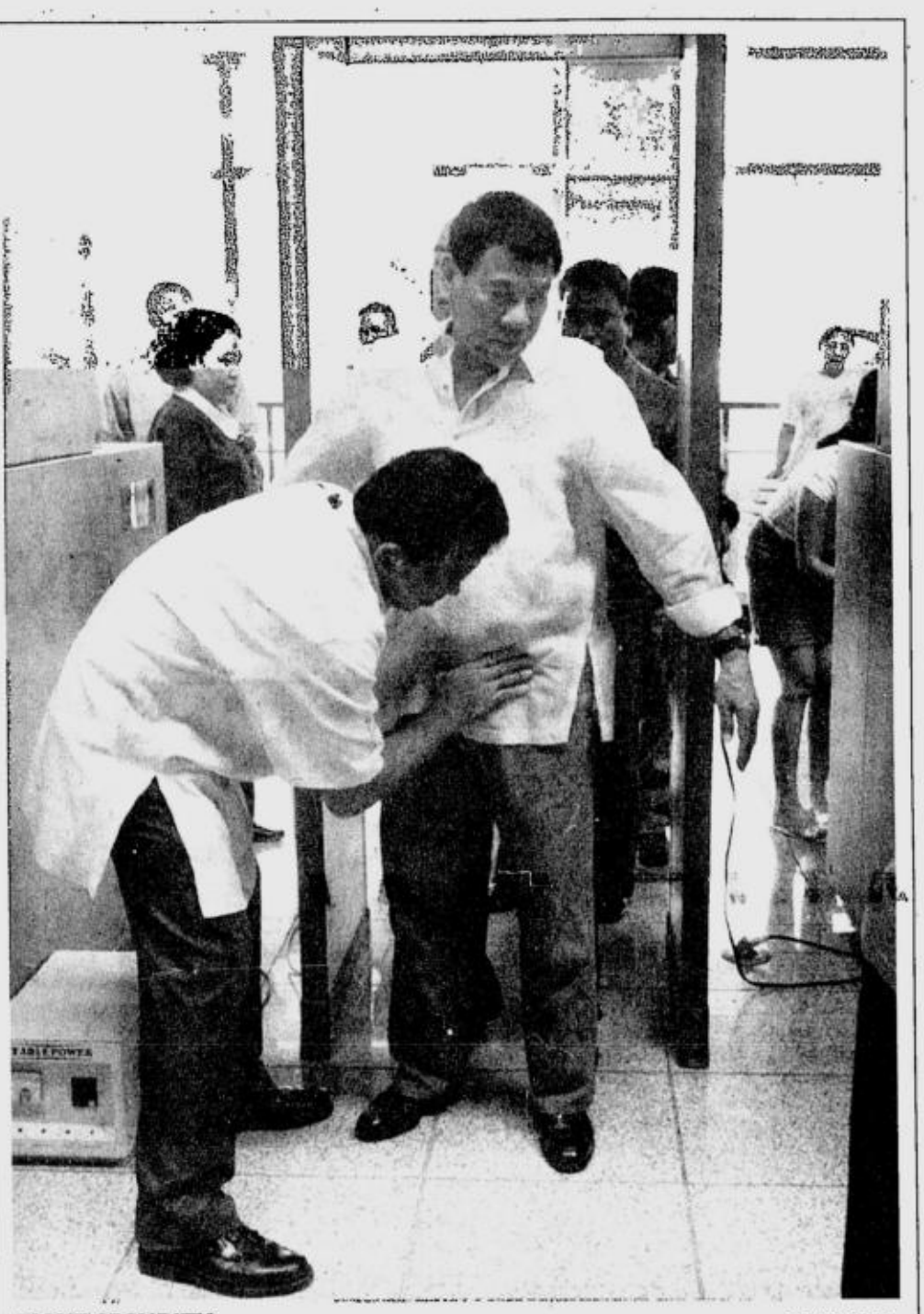
FORT DEL PILAR, Baguio City—A freshman cadet of the Philippine Military Academy died from a 20-foot fall on Tuesday afternoon while stringing up electrical wires for the traditional ring hop on Thursday. Cadet Fourth Class Abigail Manuel Tolentino, 19, of Kabacan, Cotabato, died from cerebral hemorrhage hours after he was taken to the Baguio General Hospital and Medical Center. Tolentino had volunteered to install the wiring for a decorative lantern near the hall's ceiling frame when he slipped at 2:30 p.m. Janet Cantillas, a Fort del Pilar Hospital doctor, witnessed the accident, and rushed the cadet to BGHMC, for surgery to remove a blood clot, according to a PMA press statement. But Tolentino died while undergoing operation for cerebral hemorrhage due to a fracture in the skull, said Navy Lt. Alvin Lopez, PMA public information officer.

Vincent Cabreza, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

DA to 'eliminate' dogs

NAGA CITY—The Department of Agriculture is implementing a two-pronged strategy to check the spread of rabies infection in Bicol through free anti-rabies vaccination and "dog elimination," which involves rounding up stray dogs in the streets, and then, killing and safely disposing of their carcasses. Hector Sales, DA regional director, said the spread of rabies in the region was one of the highest all over the country, with the highest record of deaths in 2003. But Sales said the number of deaths from rabies in Bicol had declined from 38 in 2003 to 21 in 2004. He said the DA had enough supply of vaccines against rabies.

Juan Escandor Jr., Southern Luzon Bureau



TIGHT SECURITY EDWIN BACASMAS

Davao City Mayor Rodrigo Duterte is not spared from frisking at his home turf as he enters the Davao International Airport March 8 for a private meeting with wood industry leaders and the subject of the tight security, President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Sector leaders sign pact to back new NLEx

LEADERS of various sectors in provinces in Central and Northern Luzon have expressed support for the operation of the new North Luzon Expressway, saying it had helped speed up the development of the two regions.

Representing sectors in transport, agriculture, industry, fishing, youth, health, the cooperative movement, at least 120 leaders approved a declaration of support in a forum held in San Fernando, Pampanga.

Rene Diaz, presidential adviser for Central Luzon, said in a statement that he congratulated the multi-sectoral assembly for their support for the new expressway, which he said would make a difference in the economy of Central and Northern Luzon.

Rosemarie Herrera led the signing of the seven-point declaration of support. It was signed by more than 100 other sectoral leaders during the forum.

Jose de Jesus, president of the Manila North Tollways Corp. (MNTC), said the firm is committed to maintain the expressway in tiptop condition and will be always in search for ways to help accelerate the growth of the two regions.

He also said the expressway would offer more discounts to motorists to make travel on the new expressway more affordable.

Herrera, head of the group Sulong sa Ikauunlad ng Gitnang Luzon Aksyon Na (Sigla), presided over the drafting and finalization of the declaration of support.

Among the actions sought by the declaration was the sharing of earnings from the Philippine National Construction Co. (PNCC) for use in setting up a sectoral assistance fund to issue gas coupons for motorists. The coupons would be used in accredited gas stations.

Sector solon slams Tiglao appointment as jobs czar

LUCENA CITY—For putting on the lap of the already overburdened Presidential Management Staff (PMS) the task of leading the government's efforts to create six million jobs for the next six years, President Macapagal-Arroyo was chided by Anakpawis Rep. Crispin Beltran.

"Clearly, President Arroyo is treating the country's massive unemployment problem lightly. Apparently, it's not serious enough for her so she's only tapping the PMS to tackle the problem, regardless of how obviously ill-equipped and ill-suited the PMS is for the gargantuan task," Beltran said in a statement.

The President has assigned PMS chief Rigoberto Tiglao to lead government efforts at job creation.

This after she signed Executive Order No. 408 last March 3, which abolished the position of presidential adviser for job generation.

The post was vacated by former agriculture secretary Luisito Lorenzo, who resigned allegedly because of too much politics.

Although Tiglao could be a man of many talents, Beltran said it was highly unlikely that the Palace official could create a million jobs every year for the next six years.

Needed jobs

"What kind of jobs can Tiglao create using his powers and authority as PMS head? The country's unemployed need work in factories, agriculture, white-collar positions—including posts in the government service," he said.

The veteran labor leader-turned-lawmaker noted that based on government estimates, the country's unemployment rate had reached a whopping 11 to 14 percent of the country's labor force.

"For the first time in recent history, the government has been forced to release food coupons and acknowledge the worsening problems of hunger and extreme destitution victimizing millions of Filipinos," he said.

The continuing rise in the cost of living, now pegged at P704 a day, contributes to the misery of the unemployed, Beltran said.

Ms Arroyo said the unemployment rate last year should have been 8 percent and not 11 percent based on the new definition (of the unemployed) recently adopted by the Department of Labor and Employment.

International standard

The DOLE adopted the international standard which measures unemployment rate as the percentage of people looking for work, according to Ms Arroyo.

The militant lawmaker said President Arroyo herself has been single-handedly contributing to the country's jobless rate.

"The executive orders she continues to churn out will inevitably result in the loss of thousands of jobs in the bureaucracy. Left and right, she is abolishing government agencies and departments and downsizing employees in the name of austerity measures," he said.

He added: "This leaves the remaining employees in the already stretched-to-the-limit bureaucracy oppressed under the weight of their multi-tasking jobs. *Delfin Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Militants demand probe of violence against women in Quezon

LUCENA CITY—At least 200 members of the militant Gabriela, accompanied by their husbands and children, marched on the city streets on Tuesday to ask local officials to investigate the series of violence against women activists in Quezon as they commemorated International Women's Day.

Last week, at least four members of the Gabriela-Quezon chapter, one of them pregnant, were arrested without a warrant of arrest on suspicion of being New People's Army rebels.

The four were released after two days at the provincial jail for lack of evidence.

Emmi de Jesus, Gabriela secretary general, however, said the release did not mean that the military and police were freed from responsibility over the violence that they caused the women.

"Despite the release, we still hold the military and the police accountable for the physical violence and the psychological trauma that our leaders experienced. We particularly hold them responsible should anything happen to Ailyn Ramos, who is four months pregnant. They knew well enough that the charges on the four are trumped up," she said.

Gabriela reiterated its challenge to President Macapagal-Arroyo to release other women and juvenile political prisoners.

Abuse

In Calamba City, the Kilusan ng Manggagawang Kababaihan sa Timog Katagalugan (KMK) said women workers remained "the most abused sector" in the country despite the country having a woman president and the passage of laws seeking to protect women's rights.

Joyce Natividad, KMK-TK chair, said women working in textile, garments and semi-conductor factories inside the various industrial hubs in Calabarzon have continuously fallen prey to unlawful labor policies of several multinational companies.

She lamented that most women workers in these factories are being forced to work for extended hours and are paid way below the P255 minimum wage in the region.

The KMK and Gabriela-Southern Tagalog led 200 other members of Left-leaning organizations in commemorating the 100th International Women's Day in a protest rally.

"Many female factory workers are forced to work for more than 12 hours a day. We even have documented cases where employers threaten women employees to work for more than 24 hours just to meet their quotas," she said in a speech.

She said many had also experienced sexual harassment from their superiors.

"But because of fear and humiliation, most of these women decided not to file a case," she said.

In Iloilo City, around 300 protesters, led by Gabriela, marched on the city's main streets with the women protesters wearing purple shirts, the color of the women's movement. They carried black placards denouncing the worsening plight of women.

In a rally across the old Iloilo provincial capitol, the protesters condemned the proposed increase in the value added tax (VAT).

Lucy Francisco, Gabriela-Panay coordinator, said women, especially mothers and wives, will be hardest hit by tax increases because they have to tighten the already meager budget for their families. *Delfin Mallari Jr. and Marlon Ramos, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau; Nestor Burgos Jr., PDI Visayas Bureau*

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INQUIRER Southern Luzon

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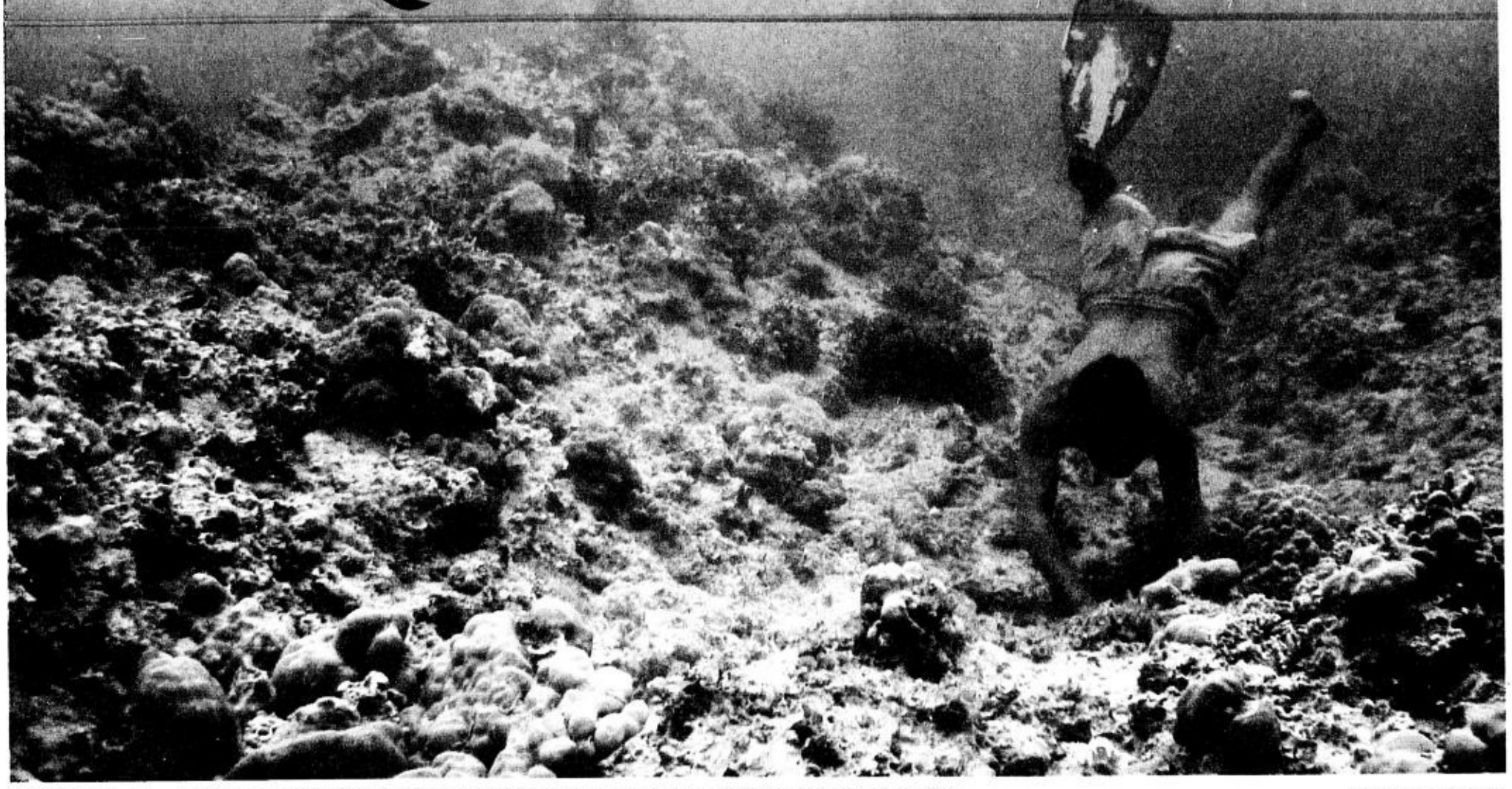


A FISHERMAN gathers fish killed as a result of cyanide poisoning inside the marine sanctuary of San Miguel Island in Tabaco City in Albay. COREY RIDINGS/CONTRIBUTOR

Islanders wage war on cyanide fishing

By Gil Francis G. Arevalo
Tabaco City

CYANIDE fishing is threatening a marine reserve area off San Miguel Island in Tabaco City, Albay, despite unrelenting efforts to protect it.

For several months now, fishermen from other places have been using cyanide in the perimeter of the marine reserve in Barangay Sagurong, according to Nestor Benito, head of the Marine Fishery Reserve Management Council (MFRMC).

"Although we have apprehended, penalized and threatened to imprison them, the fishermen still continue to engage in this illegal activity. Cyanide is destroying the corals," Benito said.

To prevent further destruction, MFRMC members, including prominent researchers and divers, have started rehabilitating the area. The program will take time to show results, Benito said.

The San Miguel Island Marine Fishery Reserve (SMIMFR) is a 225-hectare protected marine area in the Lagonoy Gulf. It was adjudged the second best-managed reef in the Philippines in 2002 by Philreefs, a consortium of organizations advocating for the protection, rehabilitation and management of coral reefs.

The reserve has been considered the first Coastal Resources Management Project (Coremap) in the region since 1990 and serves as a model for putting up and managing a marine sanctuary with the collaboration of the local community and government.

Risky

Benito said securing the reserve had become more risky since only 10 of the 20 council members had remained and consistently monitored the place while the number of illegal fishermen have increased.

"We are considering the recommendation for us to bring licensed guns, aside from the usual flashlights and scuba diving suits because aside from cyanide, we know that these culprits have guns and even dynamites with them," he said.

He argued that for self-defense and security measure, his group would be launching an all-out war against the illegal fishers, "if that would be the only way."

In most of the instances when they caught fishermen while using cyanide within the reserve, they recovered numerous dynamites, prohibited fish nets and improvised guns, as well as siganidae and spinefoot fish, all demersal species that had lived in the midst of the rich diversity of the sanctuary through the years.

SOME of the fish casualties. COREY RIDINGS/CONTRIBUTOR

Soon, according to Benito, the population of fish like groupers (which includes greasy, malabar and bedmouth), lethrinidae or emperor fish, narrow-barred Spanish mackerels, skipjack tuna, flying fish, salmon, giant trevally, red stingrays, coral catfish sharks, and yellow-tail scads will decrease if cyanide fishing in San Miguel continued to be rampant.

"I believe that in future encounters with them [illegal fishermen], they will fire at us or most likely throw a dynamite at us without hesitation," he said.

Deprived

Juan Berces, coordinator of the City Planning and Development Council who has untiringly teamed up with Benito since the reserve was established, noted that the volume of fish dwelling both in the sanctuary and in the reserve had increased three to five times.

Records showed that various ecological habitats exhibited fair to good (50-70 percent) presence, with a coral cover of 100 hectares and vast sea grass and seaweed beds of 590 hectares. There are more than 50 seaweed species that are tentatively identified as economically important.

"What worries us now is that it's not only the outsiders that threaten the reserve but also some fishermen we knew, who are also engaged in cyanide fishing," Benito sadly said.

The law-abiding fishermen of San Miguel Island have been deprived of the fishery reserve, Berces said.

"And they can do nothing but go fishing outside its perimeter as they obey the ordinance that protects the reserve at all cost," he added.

Cooperation

Corey Ridings, a marine biologist and scuba diver from Seattle who has stayed on the island for almost a year as a US Peace Corps volunteer, observed that the barangay council was no longer cooperating with the marine council.

Ridings said there was a real need for the people to be educated on the value of the reserve. The barangay council plays a vital role in supporting the program to regulate it for sustainability, she added.

Right now, the council needs more manpower to continuously protect the reserve.

It would be more effective, Ridings said, if the barangay council would be once again included in the Coremap.

Benito added that they needed upgraded scuba diving suits, flashlights, a stationary or floating guardhouse and licensed guns to be able to continue the council's work.

Tribal members star in Iriga festival

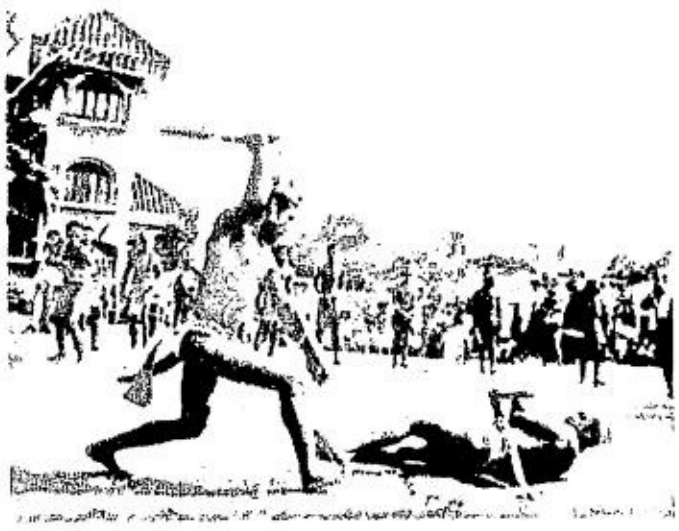
By Michael B. Jaucian
Iriga City

"CONFIDENCE makes us great performers."

This was how Pepito Cañeza, chieftain of the Itum tribe of Mt. Asog in Camarines Sur, explained why they were able to perform gracefully during the street dancing of Iriga City's Tinagba Festival on Feb. 11.

The tribe's real name is Agta Tabangnon, but the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples has yet to formally sanction it. Itum is how the tribe is usually called, which means black in Iriga.

The 40 Itum members, composed of youngsters and adults wearing their traditional costume, followed a simple dance choreography that highlighted how they live and survive in their mountain abodes.



MEMBERS of the Itum tribe perform during the Tinagba Festival in Iriga City. NIÑO JESUS ORBETA

Pets

Displaying spears, bolos and their favorite pets, such as monkeys on their backs and pythons around their necks, the natives from the upland village of Barangay Perpetual drew the attention and admiration of spectators.

Cañeza said the tribe had been participating in the festival for the past three years.

The Tinagba Festival features an ancient practice of thanksgiving for good harvest. Farmers from the different barangays offer their first crop yields to the Our Lady of Lourdes.

When they first performed, Cañeza recalled, all the Itum members felt very shy because they were not used to dance before a crowd. But they got used to performing in the streets during the succeeding celebrations, he said.

Cañeza said they were very happy because they could feel that they had been accepted and considered part of the mainstream community.

The same sentiment was expressed by Mayor Madelaine Alfelor-Gazmen, who described the Itum tribe's performance as "magnificent." In fact, she said, eight foreigners from Canada, Switzerland and Germany enjoyed watching them perform very much.

Nini Ravanilla, tourism regional director, said the tribal group of Iriga was considered the main attraction of the festival.

Cañeza attributed his people's confidence and sense of belongingness to their mentors from the University of North Eastern Philippines (Unep) in Iriga, who had been asked by the NCIP to help them. What they have learned in adult and children education has greatly boosted their morale as persons and as Filipino citizens, he said.

They speak Bicol and Tagalog, which the Unep teachers taught them. Cañeza said the 800 families in their communities still speak "Inagta" among themselves and a mixture of Bicol and Tagalog when they are with lowlanders.

Adopting the urban culture of celebrating fiestas somehow contributes to the development of the tribal members' personality but that their culture and traditions are still the best of their possessions, according to the tribal chief.

Unique culture

The Itum communities still do not enjoy electricity. Mayor Gazmen claimed that the tribesmen did not like to have electricity so that they could preserve their culture. She did not elaborate.

Most of the members are contented with what they have, be it food and other things that are useful in their day-to-day living.

Cañeza said they also offered prayers to their dead and buried their loved ones inside their houses or in their backyards.

Simple matrimonial rites are performed by the chieftain, even under a tree, by tying the hands of the groom and bride.

Albay town honors great-grandma, 103

By Michael B. Jaucian
Jovellar, Albay

SHE DRINKS herbal teas and "*pinukating lakadbulan*" (boiled *sambong* leaves) and relishes sweet potatoes, corn, cassava and vegetables cooked in coconut milk.

These, along with a strong faith in God, have kept 103-year-old Policronia Nolasco Loma strong and healthy, according to her daughter, 61-year-old Clemenia Morao.

Born on Oct. 31, 1901, Lola Cronia placed third in the search for the oldest woman in Albay in 2002.

On Feb. 14, Mayor Jose Arcangel of Jovellar town honored Loma for "living a disciplined life" and presented her a package of rice, milk and grocery items from the Department of Social Welfare and Development.

The mayor also recommended to Sr. Marian Ancheta, local coordinator of the Christian Foundation for Child and Adult, that Lola Cronia be placed under the CFCA's sponsorship program beginning Valentine's Day, for which she will receive monthly assistance from donations coming from kind-hearted people in the United States.

The donors will treat the awardee like their own grandmother, Arcangel said.

Lola Cronia only learned the basics of ABC, but her seven children are proud that they were raised and nurtured very properly. She taught them how to be strong, defiant and determined, so that challenges and hardships that come their way could be solved and managed.

When she was young, Loma earned a living by weaving abaca, according to her daughter Morao. But all of the children now enjoy financial stability. Some own big tailoring shops in Legazpi City and Daraga town in Albay.

Despite an impaired hearing and cataract in the right eye, Loma can still pinpoint who among her 47 grandchildren and 74 great-grandchildren do not kiss her hand as a show of respect.

She continues to pray the Rosary in Latin and Spanish, Morao said. "She's awake most of the time at night. She just prays. At daytime, she just takes a nap."

Gov't agency eyeing water tax to raise funds

By Blanche S. Rivera

THE NATIONAL Water Resources Board is contemplating charging a fee for the use of raw water in an effort to raise revenues to fund water resources development projects and compel consumers to conserve the increasingly scarce resource.

'Socially sensitive'

The government is trying to find a fee that is both "socially sensitive" and significant enough to encourage water conservation, according to NWRB executive director Ramon Alikpala.

"The NWRB is looking at what economic instruments we can apply to make people more aware of the value of water, and one of these things might have to be to charge raw water pricing, which means anybody who uses water from the grounds, rivers, etc. will have to pay on a per-volume basis," he said.

Water pricing

Raw water pricing is the charging of fees for the use of water from the ground, rivers, lakes and other resources.

It is a proposal being raised by international water experts to fund operation and maintenance of water facilities, recover investment costs and encourage productive and conservative use of water.

The NWRB, which started studying the viability of raw water pricing last year, said its main consideration for determining the raw water price was the amount needed for water development and environmental protection projects.

These include watershed management and protection, reforestation, water conservation programs, water supply and sanitation, irrigation projects, flood and drought control projects and possible subsidy for the poor.

Alikpala said that even a 10-centavo per cubic meter charge for raw water could raise billions in revenues to fund these development projects.

Efficient use of water

"We have to find a price for water that's socially sensitive because it will be very controversial. But it doesn't have to be very expensive. It could be as little as 10 centavos for 1 cubic meter," Alikpala said.

One cubic meter of water is approximately five drums. A normal family of six in Metro Manila uses an average of 30 cubic meters of water a month.

If the NWRB charges 10 centavos for every cubic meter, this would translate to only a P3 increase in the water bill, Alikpala said.

"The big problem is, if we try low water pricing as a way to encourage people in the efficient use of water, it might be too low," he said.

Alikpala said despite the increasing charges by water utility companies, these fees did not include charges for the use of raw water. The increases usually just account for inflation and currency rate adjustment, he said.

"Right now, nobody pays for water. You might pay for the distribution, treatment, packaging, administrative cost of delivery, but nobody is paying for water," he said.

Those who pay for deep wells, for example, pay only for the right to extract water from the ground. The fee is the same whether they extract 1 cubic meter or 100 cubic meters.

Per hectare basis

Farmers, meanwhile, pay for the use of water on a per-hectare basis, not volumetric. If they pay per hectare, there is no incentive for farmers to be efficient in water use, he said.

The NWRB is a participant in the regional conference on water governance and poverty hosted by the Los Baños-based Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture.

Water scarcity

Water consumption in the Philippines is expected to triple by 2025, from the 13 percent consumption rate now to 44 percent. About 70 percent of consumption is due to agricultural needs, the Department of Agriculture said.

International experts predict that half of Asia would experience water scarcity by 2025 due to rapid population growth and urbanization aggravated by water mismanagement.

28 Bohol pupils die of poisoning

From page A1

Francisca Doliente said her 9-year-old niece Arve Tamor was given some of the deep-fried caramelized cassava by a classmate who bought it from a regular vendor.

"Her friend is gone. She died," she told AP.

Bosbos' father Margarito was still grief-stricken at the sight of his daughter lying lifeless at the morgue at the Gov. Celestino Gallares Memorial Hospital (GCGMH).

A few feet behind him was Donato Luyong, the distraught uncle of Leonard Luyong, 8, another fatality.

Like Judy Ann, Leonard would be brought back to Mabini late last night aboard the dump trucks provided by the provincial government.

Initial reports said 14 of those killed were brought to the L.C. Cutamora Hospital and the Don Emilio del Valle Hospital, both in Mabini's neighboring town of Ubay.

Two others were reported dead in Carlos P. Garcia Hospital in Talibon town, one in the Dr. Prisco Salang Private Clinic in Mabini, and two more at the Gov. Celestino Gallares Memorial Hospital in this city.

At least 16 of the fatalities were identified. They were Kevin Salaum, 9; Ana Rose Salaum, 9; Michelle Gambuta, 8; Wilfredo Luyong, 7; Vicente Ballecer, 8; Edu Fernandez, 7; Joemar Lomotos, 13; Cirila Sanchez, 13; Julieta Sanchez, 11; Vina Mae Cual (age not available); Aiza Toyogon, 9; Juanito Hinampas, 9; Riza Ballecer, 9, and Sammy Montilla, 11.

In Manila, Dr. Troy Gepte, medical specialist at the Department of Health's National Epidemiology Center, said he had received an initial report that "the students began complaining of bowel pains accompanied by vomiting after eating cassava."

Most of the victims were brought to Ubay, according to Mon Abayon, a staff member at the town mayor's office.

Vendors

The food vendor, Anna Tinaan Luyong, 67, was herself poisoned but survived, according to Philip Fuderanan, executive assistant of Mayor Stephen Rances of Mabini. She is among the victims confined at the provincial hospital here.

The school has 276 pupils and the majority of them had eaten the food sold by Luyong, Abayon said.

Local health authorities have yet to determine what caused the poisoning. The poison could have originated from the cassava itself, the cooking oil or from the sugar used in preparing the snack.

Some types of cassava found in Bohol are poisonous, Abayon said. In fact, the juice or sap of the poisonous type must be removed first before the root crop is cooked, he added.

Abayon said Luyong had long been selling food at the school, but it was only yesterday that she sold fried cassava.

Initial reports said another vendor, who was selling the same food with Luyong, had been detained by police.

The vendor, Victoria Hibaya, 59, claimed she merely bought the rolled cassava and *bola-bola* (balls) in the neighboring Barangay Paraiso.

First aid

After eating the food, all of the school children started vomiting, Abayon said.

He said school officials tried to give first aid to the victims by making them ingest sugar or cooking oil, and by letting them drink water with charcoal so that they would vomit the food they had eaten.

Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit called up Mayor Rances last night and they talked about the mass poisoning, Fuderanan said.

He said Rances mobilized all municipal personnel to help the victims. Initially, the provincial government plans to give P2,000 cash assistance to the families of the victims, while the municipal government is considering P1,000.

Specimen

A specimen of the cassava was taken for inspection at the local Crime Laboratory Group. The case has already been reported to the Poison Control Center of the Philippine General Hospital.

The DOH is sending a team to Bohol today to investigate.

Those who survived were not yet in a talking mood when approached by the INQUIRER.

No shouts or cries

Jumel Boybanting did not look when he answered a few questions. "Many children died," he answered when asked about the tragedy.

He stared sadly at the wall, unmindful of his grandmother's attempts to feed him with crackers.

Jumel, 7, recalled that there were no shouts or cries. "Only complaints of aching stomachs," he said, still staring at the wall.

Rusel Vallecera, 9, glanced once in a while inside his room at the GCGMH'S pediatrics ward. Like Jumel, who was confined in the same room, Rusel was fitted with dextrose.

Sent home

His sister Visminda said that when he arrived home, Rusel did not tell them he was starting to feel the effects of the poisoning. He simply reported that they were sent home because many school children were sick.

"He was afraid that he would be scolded," Visminda explained.

When he started to complain, they had to rush him to the nearest hospital in town.

Visminda said that when they got to the Rural Health Center in Poblacion, Mabini, it was already packed with so many sick children.

Emergency room

Over at the emergency room, four more children were brought in 8:30 p.m., bringing to 12 the number of victims confined at the GCGMH.

Again, there were no shrill shouts. Like Rusel and Jumel, the children were still too weak—and bewildered to say anything.

Fuderanan said the reports of the poisoning were not immediately reported to the mayor's office because the barangay is about 20 km from the town proper.

He said a 24-hour monitoring service had been set up at the municipal hall to assist the victims and their families.

Acting Gov. Julius Caesar Herrera immediately ordered the deployment of all available ambulances to Mabini and the hospitals where the victims were brought. *With reports from Christian V. Esguerra and INQUIRER wires*

Cyanide in cassava

From page A1

dizziness and started vomiting shortly after eating half-cooked cassava.

Cassava's scientific name is *Manihot esculenta*. It is known as *kamoteng kahoy* or *balinghoy* among Tagalogs, *balanghoy* among Cebuanos, and *balangkoy* among Ilocanos.

Sources: PDI Archives; "Plants of the Philippines"

Analysts give conflicting views on VAT bill

From page A1

ident Macapagal-Arroyo should push for the VAT rate increase. It cautioned that any watering down of a bill aimed at raising VAT revenues by about P60 billion could dent the growing optimism and spark the selling of government bonds.

Investors have turned bullish on the Philippines. The peso, Asia's second-best-performing currency this year, hit a 19-month high of 54.41 to the US dollar on Wednesday. The local stock market has risen also 18 percent this year, making it the best performer in Southeast Asia

Wilson said there was potential for further gains if fiscal reforms stayed on track. UBS said it had raised its forecast for the peso to 55 per dollar by the end of 2005 from 57 previously. It also raised its 2005 GDP growth forecast to 5 percent from 4.5 percent.

The UBS report said a decision last year to raise power rates, cut the budget deficit and open up of the mining sector to foreign investment had "vastly improved" the country's credit outlook.

"If we don't get a VAT increase through, then the assumption of fiscal consolidation comes under question," said Wilson, adding that Philippine sovereign bonds would probably suffer under that scenario.

The Senate and House of Representatives have locked horns over the VAT bill. The House has passed a version raising the rate to 12 percent from 10, while the Senate favors a bill that would slash exemptions while leaving the rate the same.

The President is pushing aggressively for a VAT rate increase and the lifting of exemptions on oil and power firms to bring down the budget deficit and reduce the national debt.

Other view

Condor Advisers Inc., however, said rasing the VAT rate would only push the Philippines to the brink.

"Perhaps the Arroyo government's promise of fiscal rectitude has consoled investors. Nonetheless, this very rectitude will prompt the country's inevitable default," Gundzik said.

In a report titled, "Why the Philippines could be the next Argentina," Gundzik outlined the similarities between the fiscal state of the Philippines and Argentina before it defaulted on its debt in 2001.

He said Argentina's attempt to tighten fiscal policy was far too late to extricate the country from its debt trap. Rather than reduce the fiscal deficit, tighter fiscal policy in Argentina stunted economic growth, making loan default inevitable.

"One of the key reasons why economic growth slowed in Argentina was the gathering social revolt. Increasing social instability in Argentina, driven by increasing unemployment, rising taxes and nonpayment of public sector wages and pensions, created political instability, the eventual collapse of the government and default," Gundzik said. "The same pattern is being replicated in the Philippines."

Gundzik noted that sharp cut in the Philippine government's spending on social services from 35 percent in 2000 to 23 percent in 2004 "has contributed to the intensification of the country's Muslim and communist insurgencies and to growing social instability."

Adding to fears of a social revolt is the lingering question on the legitimacy of the Arroyo administration. "Significantly, several opinion polls indicate that the majority of the Philippine electorate view the Arroyo government as illegitimate due to fraudulent elections in 2004," Gundzik said.

"The social and political similarities between the Philippines and pre-default Argentina continue to be overlooked. The risk of default in the Philippines is much higher than is generally believed," he added. *With a report from Reuters*

HK graftbuster slams findings on RP corruption

From page A1

problem in the country but stressed that her administration had been making "decisive" steps to fight it.

"While I feel that they should have recognized our efforts to fight corruption, what I would like to assure the world and the people of the Philippines is that we are determined to address this endemic problem," she told reporters in Cebu.

She noted that the results of the survey had been like that for decades. "What we are trying to do is to reverse the perception and with the political will we are showing now, in time that perception would be removed," the President said.

Finance Secretary Cesar Purisima said measures had been put in place to address corruption.

Among these are the lifestyle checks on government officials and employees, strengthening of the powers of the Office of the Ombudsman and the Procurement Act, which Purisima said had reduced corruption in agencies like the Department of Public Works and Highways.

Victim of success

Because the PERC study simply measured the perception of expatriates, it was prone to "bias and subjectivity" and a country could have in fact been a "victim of its own success," Kwok said.

Surveys like PERC's "actually fail to recognize (a country's) effort of fighting corruption," he said. "They simply focus on foreigners' perception so this is very unfair, particularly to those countries which have been trying very hard (to curb corruption)."

He noted that the Philippines had been trying very hard to fight corruption. "Because it's been very successful in getting the big fishes, it becomes the most corrupt country," he added.

That's because the campaign would naturally be highlighted by media and thereby "created a wrong impression" about the country before foreign businessmen, he said.

Since his services were tapped in 2002, Kwok said he had seen "positive changes, big and small," in the government's effort to reduce opportunities for corruption.

"It's not a mission impossible," he said, pointing out that Hong Kong might have in fact been more corrupt than the Philippines before the ICAC spearheaded a campaign that eventually put the former British territory in order.

Instead of ranking countries, surveys would do better by just classifying countries between "more corrupt and less corrupt" in a table, he said.

"I think this is a more acceptable survey," he said. "Because when a survey tries to rank (countries), you feel happy because next year, you're the fourth most corrupt country. You're pleased!"

Throw big guys in jail

Peter Wallace, president of the think tank Economic Intelligence Unit, said the PERC report confirmed the results of a survey conducted in September last year.

Corruption was ranked first among the 10 disadvantages in doing business in the Philippines as identified by 50 multinational companies in the country.

Wallace nevertheless said the President had made a good start in the fight against corruption with the lifestyle checks on government officials. He, however, said it was too early to conclude if the government had done enough to curb corruption.

Asked what the government should do to address the problem, Wallace replied: "Throw some people in jail. And not just some local guys but some big guys. It does not matter which department."

Well-deserved reputation

Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. said the findings of PERC validated the opposition's suspicion that the Arroyo administration reeked of corruption.

"That's a well-deserved bad reputation. It can get worse if Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo doesn't shape up," Pimentel said.

In a speech at the Trinity College of Quezon City, Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago said news about the country being the second most corrupt country in Asia was nothing new.

"It is one of the reasons why every year, millions of Filipinos, fresh college graduates leave for abroad to become overseas contract workers," she said.

Santiago said poverty, lack of a sustained anticorruption drive and lack of a student anticorruption drive were among the reasons for the prevalence of the culture of corruption in the country.

"The best way to start is for the President to order a national transparency campaign under which important decisions are made on the basis of information made available to the media and the public," she said.

In Malacañang, presidential chief legal counsel Merceditas Gutierrez said the country would probably lick corruption after six or seven years or by the time Ms Arroyo had completed her term.

"The President wants to solve corruption while still in office," Gutierrez said.

In Baguio City, an official of the Presidential Anti-Graft Commission said corruption was one of the most difficult crimes to combat.

PAGC Commissioner Nicasio Conti said at a Northern Luzon anticorruption forum last week that eradicating corruption could not be achieved overnight.

Conti said that under the Medium Term Development Plan (MTDP), one of the strategies in enhancing trade and investments in the country was reducing red tape in all government agencies.

The MTDP noted that officials' lack of autonomy from big economic interests, low pay of civil servants, low social awareness of the effects of corruption, and high tolerance for corrupt practices were breeding corrupt practices.

The document cited the "need for greater transparency, integrity and accountability in government transactions." *With reports from Gil Cabacungan Jr. and TJ Burgonio in Manila and Desiree Caluza, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

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MacArthur expansion begins in May

By Leila B. Salaverria

THE BIDDING for the MacArthur Highway widening project is set to begin next month, with the Department of Public Works and Highways aiming to fast track the process to provide a good alternative road for motorists complaining of the high toll increases at the North Luzon Expressway (NLEX).

The widening of a portion of the highway from Meycauyan, Bulacan, to San Fernando, Pampanga, is estimated to cost P500 million, according to Public Works Undersecretary Manuel Bonoan.

According to the plan, the 34.478-kilometer stretch would be turned from a two-lane to a four-lane road. Construction work is expected to start in May and end in November this year.

"We started advertising the project last year, and we're set to enter the bidding phase this April. From there, we expect the project to proceed as planned," he added.

Bonoan said the department is coordinating closely with local governments, where that stretch of the highway passes through, to ensure that the project would not be delayed. With the local government's help, the task of closing right-of-way deals and the clearing of obstructions in the affected areas had been 80 percent completed, he pointed out.

"We want to speed up the project so as not to prolong the agony of those using the North Luzon Expressway," he told the INQUIRER.

In order to avoid the new rates at the NLEX, which went up to 400 percent of the former toll, motorists had been using the MacArthur Highway as an alternative road. However, the additional number of vehicles using the highway had also increased the volume of traffic in the area.

The proposed additional lanes are meant to accommodate the traffic diverted from the NLEX.

Bonoan, however, said the road widening project is only the initial phase of its planned rehabilitation.

He said the succeeding phases of the highway's rehabilitation is estimated to cost P3.3 billion, and would include the improvement of its drainage system, the widening of the remaining portions of the highway and of its bridges, and the rehabilitation of its original two lanes. These phases are scheduled to begin in 2006.

Bonoan said the two new lanes of the MacArthur Highway would be made of concrete, unlike the the original two lanes which have a concrete base but are topped with asphalt.

But for the next phases of the project, the old lanes would be topped with concrete as well, he said.

NBI seeks night arrest guidelines from DOJ

By Margaux C. Ortiz

NATIONAL Bureau of Investigation (NBI) Director Reynaldo Wycoco yesterday said he would seek clarifications from Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez regarding the order preventing them from arresting suspected criminals during nighttime operations.

"We will comply with Secretary Gonzalez's instructions because he is our boss," Wycoco said, "but we will ask for additional guidelines because there may be an increase in criminal activities following the issuance of the order."

Wycoco added that the order would severely restrict the NBI's surveillance and anti-crime operations.

"Most of these criminals do not sleep," the NBI director said, emphasizing that most crimes take place during the evening. "The order may have a negative effect on our anti-crime campaign."

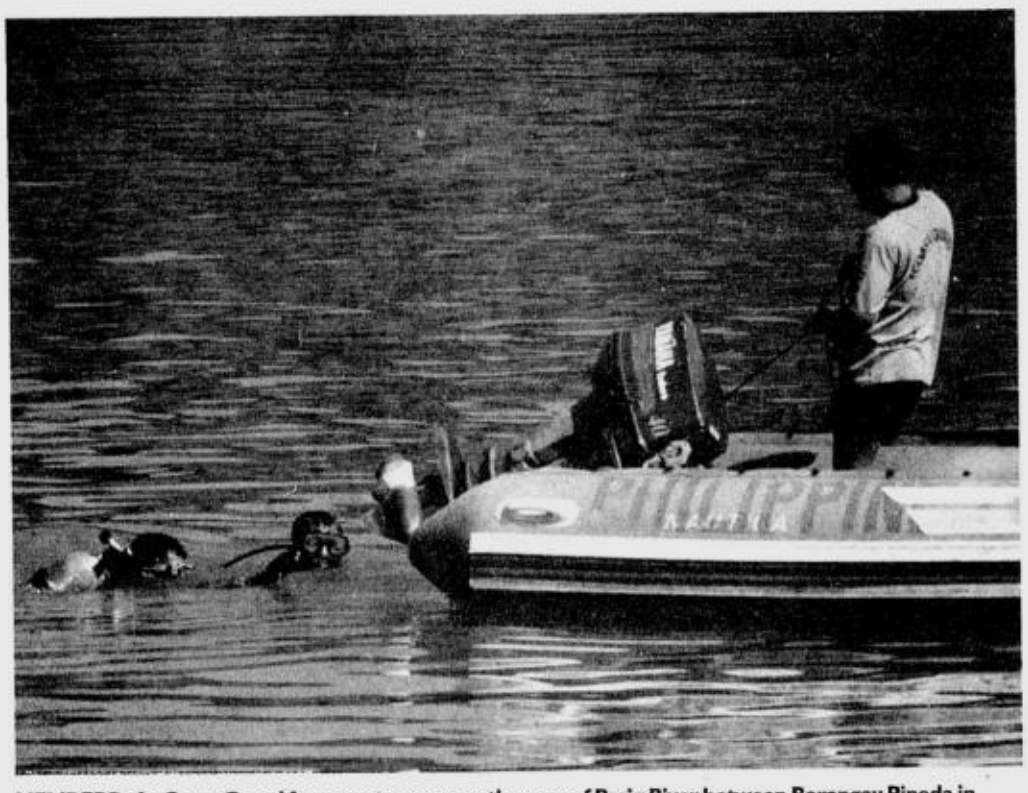
"Our agents would be happy to rest at night, but not to the detriment of the community," he added.

Wycoco also clarified that it has been the bureau's policy to refrain from conducting night arrests, particularly during Friday nights or weekends.

He said they only conduct arrests on weekends "if there is a flight risk or if dangerous criminals are involved."

Gonzalez had said arresting or "inviting" alleged suspects for questioning at night was unfair because they could not get lawyers and have inquest fiscal attend to them in the dead of night. The practice could be a "big opening for abuse if not properly guided," he added.

Brothers go missing while rescuing ferry passengers



MEMBERS of a Coast Guard frogmen team scour the area of Pasig River between Barangay Pineda in Pasig City and Barangay West Rembo in Makati City for two brothers who went missing while attempting to rescue victims of a boat accident Tuesday night. REM ZAMORA

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

THEY could have just watched as passengers of a boat that capsized Tuesday night struggled in the water but they decided to dive in to save whoever they can from drowning.

Brothers Richard and Ralgy Serantes remained missing after they were last seen going under the dark, murky waters of the Pasig River.

The INQUIRER came upon their father, Federico, staring at the river, which looked calm yesterday noon.

The father, still waiting for his sons, was silent. Inside their house on the river bank in Barangay Pineda, Pasig City, Richard's pregnant wife was crying.

Barangay officials had given up hope they would still find the brothers alive. But a team from the Coast Guard continued searching for the two.

Barangay Pineda chair Jaime De Leon told the INQUIRER that at about 7:30 p.m. the other day, the motor banca suddenly tilted.

Delia Canonoy, 50, one of the 12 people in the boat when it overturned, said the boat was already at the Zero Block boat port in Barangay West Rembo, Makati City, when three passengers suddenly stood up to get off.

The sudden shift in weight caused the boat to tip and throw the other passengers overboard, said Senior Insp. Romel Tradio, Makati City fire operations chief, who joined rescue operations.

The screams of the passengers apparently caught the attention of Ralgy, 22, who was inside their shanty in front of the river.

Thinking that one of his cousins was in the boat, Ralgy jumped into the river. His older brother Richard, 29, jumped after him.

Ralgy already saved two passengers when he saw Richard in the middle of the river, trapped in water lilies, struggling to keep afloat, their aunt Daisy Nicoyco said, quoting neighbors.

She said Richard could have experienced cramps.

Ralgy rushed to save his brother. But neighbors saw the two disappear in the darkness of the water. *With a report from Tarra V. Quismundo*

Proposal may put philanderer on the spot

By Norman Bordadora

WOMANIZERS, a warning.

If a proposal for the implementation of a barangay registry is carried out, men with more than one wife might have to be forced to make a tough decision.

During deliberations Tuesday on what data to include in the registry, Caloocan City Mayor Enrico Echiverri said apart from the basic information, the name of wife of a married man should be included.

"I think we should also include the name of the person's spouse. So that we will know who's the original and who's not," Echiverri said.

Data in the registry, which will form the barangay database, may be included in the ID system being planned for residents of the different localities in Metro Manila.

In Tuesday's meeting Interior Secretary Angelo Reyes pushed for the establishment of the database in pursuant to Section 394 of the Local Government Code.

So far, the draft form of the Department of the Interior and Local Government for barangay registration includes a resident's name, address, place and date of birth, gender, civil status, citizenship, occupation and "other information."

Manila Mayor Lito Atienza, chair of the Metro Manila Mayors Association, said local officials should meet with DILG staff to iron out what data should be included in the barangay registration form.

He, however, announced after their meeting that the Metro Manila mayors have adopted Reyes plan to strictly implement the Local Government Code provision on barangays being required to maintain records of community residents.

"This is a start to come up with a city ID," Atienza told reporters.

"It is important that we come up with a uniform (registration system). So that once a national ID is in place, it will be easier to collate the data," Reyes said.

The metrowide barangay listup will come in three phases, as agreed by the mayors and Reyes.

These are the collection of data, the cleansing of inaccuracies, and the issuance of barangay registration numbers that would be unique for every resident.

Reyes plans to involve the other local government units outside the National Capital Region in a similar barangay registration pursuant to Section 394 of the Local Government Code.

Marikina 'barkers' to sport new look

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

IF YOU see uniformed men sporting accredited identification cards calling out to passengers in Marikina City, don't be surprised.

They are not traffic enforcers, but "barkers," persons hired to attract passengers into riding public utility vehicles, especially jeepneys.

When a recently passed ordinance is fully implemented next month, "barkers" in Marikina City will soon be putting on uniforms and IDs.

Ordinance No. 13 (Series of 2005), introduced by Councilor Efren De Guzman, regulates the operation of jeepney and taxi "barkers" in the city.

The new ordinance now requires all "barkers" to register with the city government to make their operations legal.

Traffic jams

"Illegal 'barkers' operating in no-loading areas cause traffic jams. Requiring them to register would help weed out the illegals and ease up traffic," De Guzman said.

The registration fee for an applicant costs P100. Accredited "barkers" shall be given IDs, which would have to be renewed yearly.

The "barkers" will be assigned to certain areas and they will not be allowed to operate outside elsewhere.

Requirements

Certificates from barangay, city hall and police officials are required prior to registration.

Applicants should also first be accredited by jeepney associations in Marikina City.

"Barkers" who insist on plying their trade without registering shall be made to pay P2,000 in fines.

The ordinance is expected to be fully operational next month.

Olivarez a no-show at election case hearing, faces arrest

By Jocelyn R. Uy

POST bail or be arrested.

The Parañaque Regional Trial Court has given former mayor Pablo Olivarez five days to post the P24,000 bail or face arrest.

For failing to appear before the sala of Judge Fortunito Madrona of Branch 274 for the fourth time, the magistrate warned that if Olivarez failed to post bail, a warrant for his arrest would be issued.

Olivarez is facing two counts of Violation of Sec. 261 Art. 22 of the Omnibus Election Code for allegedly engaging in vote buying in the May 10, 2004, elections.

The complainants were Renato Comparativo, Bienvenido Dino and Rogelio Fuentes.

But according to Olivarez's lawyer, the former mayor's absence was due to an alleged death threat.

The lawyer, Antonio Ante, was present at the hearing scheduled yesterday morning.

Olivarez was also requesting for a transfer of venue due to the death threat, but this petition would only be granted if he attend the arraignment first, the judge said.

Olivarez, was unseated as mayor in 1995, when he lost to comedian Joey Marquez. He ran against Mayor Florencio Bernabe last year.

Health risk raised in Payatas project

By D.J. Yap

THE "PAYATAS Ecoville Project" may have been conceived with only the best intentions, but it's still a dumb idea, according to an environmentalist.

The housing project, which seeks to convert a portion of the Quezon City dump into a model community for urban poor folk, could be very dangerous to the health of its residents, said Joey Papa, president of the environment group Bangon Kalikasan Movement.

Papa, who also heads the dump/landfills taskforce of the Eco Waste Coalition, said the area "stinks."

"People who live there or close by can attest to the fact that there's a terrible smell coming from the dump," he said, adding that this would make the proposed housing project inhabitable.

Papa challenged Quezon City officials who facilitated the proposed project to live in the area for six months. "Let's see what happens to their health," he said.

The Payatas dump was converted from an open dump into a "controlled" facility without getting an environmental compliance certificate from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), according to Papa.

Local officials overseeing the Payatas dump had said an ECC was unnecessary since they already had a "permit to proceed," also from the DENR.

METROBRIEFS

Malabon intercedes for squatters

TO AVOID a possible violent demolition, Malabon City Mayor Canuto Oreta on Tuesday filed a motion for intervention in behalf of more than 4,000 squatter families along Letre Road who are facing eviction. Oreta asked Branch 56 of the Metropolitan Trial Court to delay the notice of execution it issued on March 3 saying the city was not properly informed of the court's order. While the city, Oreta said was not a party to the case it had to get involved because according to Republic Act 7279 the city had an obligation to "underprivileged and homeless citizens."

Nancy C. Carvajal

Fake jeans seized

THE NATIONAL Bureau of Investigation (NBI) seized thousands of pesos worth of fake Lee jeans in two raids on Monday afternoon. NBI operatives raided stalls H-6 and H-7 at the ground floor and units 10S-8 and 10S-9 at the 10th floor of Juan Luna Plaza, Juan Luna, Binondo, Manila upon the complaint of HD Lee Corporation, Inc. The stores were owned by MMAStar Collection's Johnny Sy, Sana Sy and Alfredo Makati Makat, according to agent Dave Segunial. Segunial said they were able to confiscate 1,261 fake Lee pants, 186 hang tags, 153 leather patches and two booklets used in illegal transactions worth P200,000. Charges of trademark infringement and unfair competition will be filed against the owners. If found guilty, the suspects could be imprisoned for two to seven years and pay P50,000 to P200,000 fine.

Margaux C. Ortiz

ASTEP meet

THE ASSOCIATION of Science Teachers and Educators of the Philippines (ASTEP) invites all teachers to its 2nd National Convention to be held at the Development Academy of the Philippines Conference Center in Tagaytay City on April 14-16. It is dubbed "Community Consciousness Through Science." ASTEP members and all interested science teachers of the primary and secondary levels may confirm their attendance at the convention or get other details by calling 6474374 and 6479054 on or before Feb. 28.

MAP Friday forum

THE MANAGEMENT Association of the Philippines will hold a forum on the debt problem, Friday noon at the Grand Ballroom of Hotel InterContinental Manila in Makati City. Speakers at the affair are World Bank country director Joachim Von Amsberg; UP College of Social Sciences, and Philosophy professor and Akbayan chair Dr. Walden Bello; and JG Summit Holdings Inc. director and senior adviser, former Bangko Sentral governor and former PNB president Gabriel C. Singson. Attendees can expect to hear new ideas to avoid an Argentina-like debt crisis and a workable formula for effectively managing our DOF-announced P3.8-trillion debt. For reservations, please call the MAP secretariat at 7511149 to 52.

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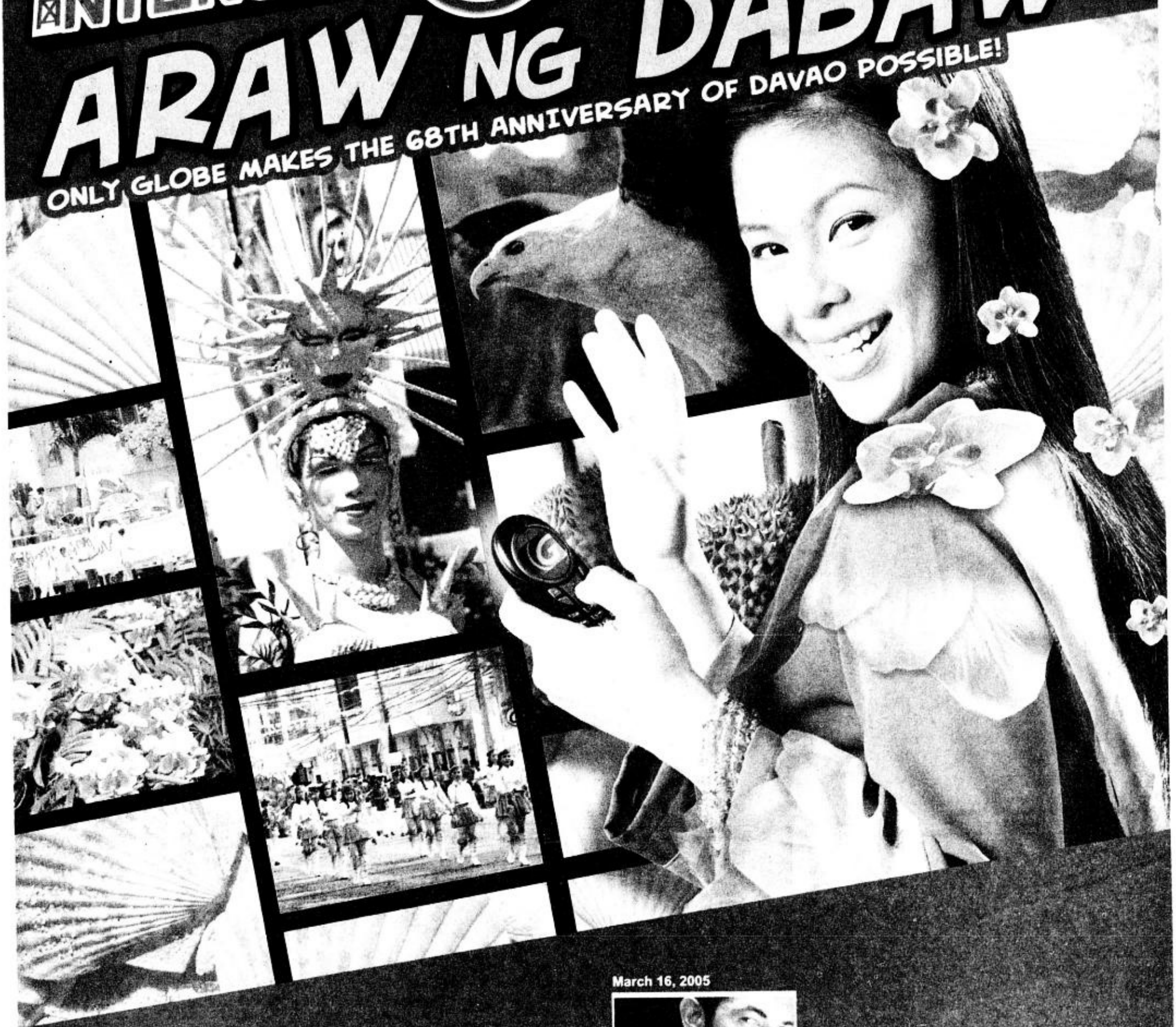

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- RODY Project Awards Night at NCCC Activity Center

March 11, 2005
- Salbakuta Concert at Rizal Park
- Musikalikasang Pinagyaman ng KATRIBU at NCCC Activity Center
- Talentong Lokal ng Rough Cut handog ng NCCC
- Gentxt Street Party at Rizal Promenade featuring 8 Miles Band and Utopia Band

March 12, 2005
- "Ato ni Bay" Karate National Championship at NCCC Activity Center
- Street Party featuring Mocha and her Band at NCCC Mall (until March 13, 2005)
- Sheryn Regis with FourPlay Band at the Entertainment Plaza of SM City Davao
- Chocoleyt and Bullet at NCCC Parking Area

March 13, 2005
- Sayawan sa Daan at Rizal Park, Roxas Avenue and selected streets
- Sugar Free Band at the Entertainment Plaza of SM City Davao
- Sunday Night Retro and Rock & Roll Special featuring The Oldies Band at Matina Town Square

March 14, 2005
- Power Showdown at the Activity Center of NCCC Mall
- Globe Sale Day at NCCC Mall

March 15, 2005
- The Ultimate Concert Series 2 featuring Dice and K9 at Matina Town Square
- Mutya ng Dabaw Finals at CAP Auditorium
- Disco sa Kanto at various streets of Davao
- Gentxt Street Party at Rizal Promenade featuring Spaghetti Incident Band and Utopia Band
- 10% discount on all food and drinks for Gentxters on all bars located within Rizal Promenade
- Street Party with La Carlotta at the Genesis 88 Compound beside SM City Davao
- Star of Davao Album Launch at the Activity Center of NCCC Mall
- Todo Sayaw, Todo Galaw Dance Competition at the Activity Center of NCCC Mall
- Thor Mall Tour at the Entertainment Plaza of SM City Davao

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March 17-19, 2005
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BASKETBALL: NBA—Warriors vs Pistons; 8:30 a.m. (r-9 p.m.); Solar Sports—Baron Davis leads his new squad Golden State against defending champion Detroit.
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SPORTS

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Pacquiao easy sparring target

By Recah Trinidad

LOS ANGELES, California—An eager horde of Mexican media men were surprised to see Manny Pacquiao, described by his trainer to be in peak form, receive clear blows to the head during a sparring session yesterday at the Wild Card Boxing Club in Hollywood.

Pacquiao, sluggish and slow, hardly resembled the sharp, ferocious Filipino knockout artist the Mexicans had come to see.

One Latino scribe walked away obviously convinced that Erik Morales was right in saying that Pacquiao was a one-dimensional fighter.

"Manny, Erik said you don't move inside the ring, you just stand still," the Mexican reporter had asked before Pacquiao started sparring.

"That's his opinion, we prepared long and hard for this fight," Pacquiao had countered.

Pacquiao's trainer, Freddie Roach, was quick to assure there was no need to worry.

Roach told the Inquirer Pacquiao was "a hundred per cent and ready to go."

Roach would however sound like a big liar based on Pacquiao's lethargic stand against his first sparring partner, Jose Sta. Cruz (18-0), a five-foot-eight full lightweight who simulated the fighting style of Morales.

Pacquiao worked the body well, but was often on the receiving end of Sta. Cruz's slow right hand, a flaw that had Puerto Rican cutman Lenny de Jesus shaking his head.

The second sparmate, Sugar Ray Beltran, often had to stop punching whenever Pacquiao would balk at mid-ring.

Beltran, strong and speedy, was allowed to belt at Pacquiao's abdomen as the sparring headed to an end.

Roach had to be asked if Pacquiao had any problem.

"Nothing," Roach said, "Manny was just playing with these boys."

Journalist Winchell Campos, who has been covering the training since early January, reported that several Pacquiao sparmates had to be decommissioned due to injuries.

But most members of the Mexican media that attended training yesterday walked away convinced that Pacquiao had been overrated.

Buboy Fernandez, Pacquiao's trusted Filipino handler, however, explained Pacquiao was not supposed to box his best before the Mexican audience.

"Hindi puwedeng ipakita lahat (We were not supposed to bare all)" Fernandez said.

It was later said that spies from the Morales camp were able to squeeze themselves into the Mexican media group.

Yesterday's sparring session at Wild Card should help level the odds for the March 19 showdown, wherein Pacquiao has continued to be favored.

Pacquiao, who has promised the Mexican press a good, exciting fight, leaves for Las Vegas with his team on Monday.

Morales is expected at the fight site on the same day.

PACQUIAO: Playing with sparmates. AP

No-camera policy at Wild Card Gym

By Salven L. Lagumbay, *Contributor*

WORLD-RENOWNED trainer Freddie Roach has adopted a "No-Camera" policy at the Wild Card Gym as reigning Ring Magazine featherweight king Manny Pacquiao enters the final stages of his training for the March 19 showdown with Erik "El Terible" Morales.

While he welcomed the huge turnout at the gym during media day, Roach had advised visiting mediamen to turn off their cameras while the Filipino boxing icon sparred with Jose Armando Sta. Cruz.

Apparently, Roach is trying to neutralize whatever tactical lessons the Morales group can get from the Pacquiao training camp, as reports circulated over the Internet that videotapes of Pacquiao sparring at the gym have been sold wantonly.

This raised concern that one of those tapes might reach Morales' camp.

"There's too many people in my gym," Roach told Fightnews, a leading boxing website.

Roach told the visiting mediamen that Pacquiao is currently at 129 pounds and has lost none of his speed at the higher weight. Pacquiao's last sparring session will be on Monday (Tuesday in Manila).

Team Pacquiao will then motor from LA to Las Vegas to wait for the big bout, while Erik Morales will be arriving in Las Vegas by jet from Mexico on Tuesday (Wednesday in Manila).

Meanwhile, reports coming out of Mexico have indicated that Morales has been sparring with former world champ Johnny Tapia and is himself looking good and fast during sparring sessions.

Tapia was been brought in to help Victor Polo, who is also preparing for his bout with Juan Manuel Marquez.

Philsoc still luring Smart

THERE are other ways with which Smart Communications Inc. can help the Philippine Southeast Asian Games Organizing Committee.

"They have products other than their wireless services so there are other avenues that they can help," said Philsoc chair Obet Pagdanganan after Smart backed out of its bid to be one of the major sponsors of the SEAG starting Nov. 27.

Pete Cura, Philsoc marketing committee chair, said there are still ongoing meetings with Smart top honcho Manny Pangilinan.

"Mr. Pangilinan already expressed his desire and intent to help," said Cura. "We've been talking to MVP and he has other services like PLDT for their landline and the Mabuhay Satellite."

Cura added there are other major deals lined up. *Jasmine W. Payo*

Pelonia thwarts Mongol

WORLD Boxing Federation international welterweight champion Rey Pelonia survived fatigue and fast-finishing Mongolian Baira Kim en route to a unanimous decision triumph in the main draw of the "More Classic Let's Get It On In Mandaluyong" Tuesday night.

Pelonia, who predicted a victory inside four rounds, had Kim on the defensive early with crisp combinations to the head and hard punches to the body to the delight of the big crowd at the Mandaluyong Gym.

The three judges scored it 98-93, 99-91, 98-92 for Pelonia, who improved to 33-21-3 (win-loss-draw) with 22 knockouts. Kim suffered his fourth loss against 17 wins spiced by 15 stoppages.

Kim had Pelonia wobbly on two occasions in the 10th and final stanza, but the Filipino threw jabs to weather the Mongolian onslaught.

Sukamo "Master Showman" Banjao suffered a knockout loss to Yura Dima in the bottom half of the main draw.

The WBF international flyweight champion was ahead, before getting decked in the final frame by Dima's rapid combinations and downed for good by a solid body shot.

Baby Lorona Jr. shared the spotlight in the fight card sponsored by More, Fortune, Mark, Café Puro, Family Rubbing Alcohol and Jemah Television president Mark Roces by stopping Joebar Damosmog to claim the PBF junior lightweight title.

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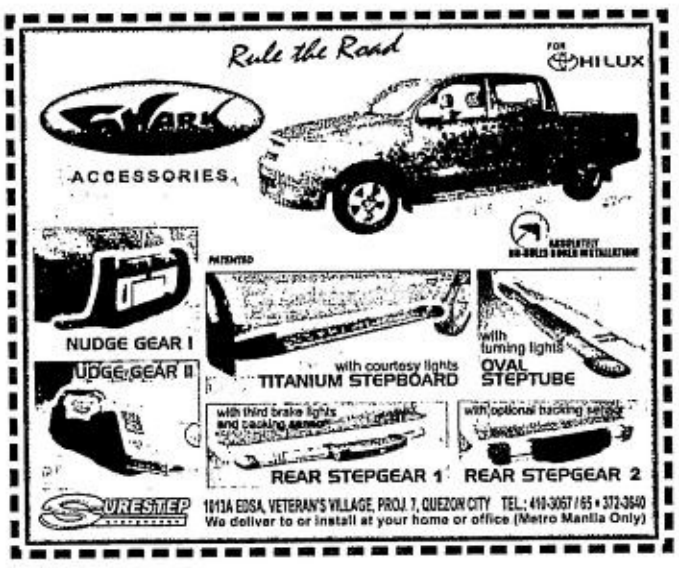


Pro-bound Juvic leads at halfway mark of DHL tilt

By Musong R. Castillo

CANLUBANG, Laguna—Playing in his last amateur tournament, Juvic Pagunsan zoomed to the top after 36 holes of the DHL-WWWExpress Open yesterday, firing a six-under-par 66 for a one-shot lead over two Southwoods bets.

The 26-year-old, who bid the Philippine team adieu in a bitter way last Monday, shot nine birdies against three bogeys in a 34-32 card for a two-day 139 total, one up on young Southwoods guns Tonlits Asistio and Artemio Murakami.

Asistio, one of the heroes in Southwoods' classic victory over Canlubang in the recent Philippine Airlines Interclub in Bacolod, shot a 69 like Murakami on another hot and humid day at the North course for a 140 total.

Murakami, a former RP Amateur winner and the steadiest player for Southwoods in Bacolod, was a teammate of Pagunsan in the last World Amateurs in Puerto Rico last year.

"I hope this continues until tomorrow and Friday," said Pagunsan, seventh at the start of the round, in Filipino. "I just felt in synch today and I hit my shots close."

Boyet Saragoza, who teed off tied for the lead, assembled a 70 in windy conditions to stay within range of a first major win. The 32-year-old, who won the Canlubang Amateur Open last year, has a 144 aggregate.

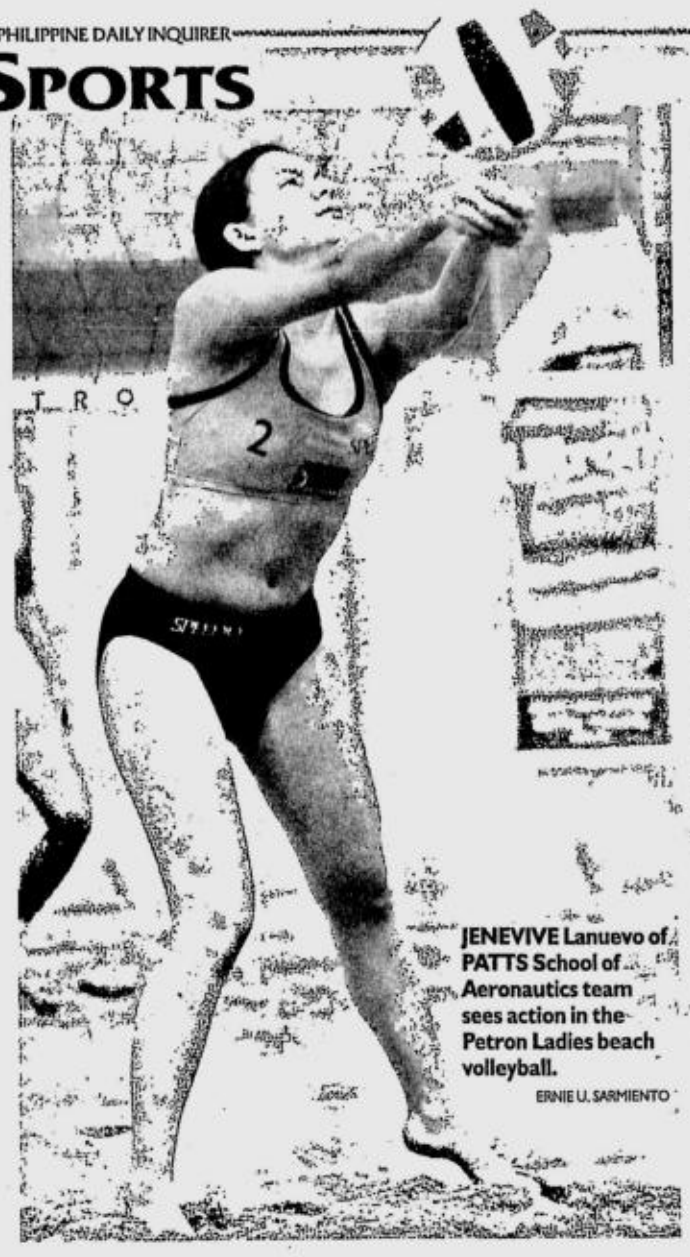
Defending champion Jun Bernis also made his move with another 69 to tie Canlubang teammate Saragoza. Bernis, who held fort last year when Pagunsan gave chase in the fourth round, shot a 75 in the first round.

Meanwhile, Jayvie Agojo signed for a 74 for a four-shot lead in the 54-hole ladies' division that started yesterday.

The incoming college freshman at Pepperdine University in the United States had a 38-36 card and led World Amateur teammates Lora Roberto and Anya Tanpinco and Korean Lee Seo-jae, who all turned in 78s.

Lina De Guzman failed to take advantage of her familiarity with her home course, stumbling with a 79.

Dottie Ardina, the 10-year-old pocket-sized wonder, carded an 81 to tie Debbie de Villa and Regina de Guzman for sixth place.



JENEVIVE Lanuevo of PATTS School of Aeronautics team sees action in the Petron Ladies beach volleyball.

ERNIE U. SARMIENTO

Ladies' volley cast complete

THE 1ST leg of the 2005 Petron Ladies' Beach Volleyball Tournament blasts off at the Clearwater Country Club in Clarkfield, Pampanga, tomorrow.

Reigning champions Michelle Laborte and Cecile Tabuena of the Philippine Navy, together with Philippine Army's Jennifer Bohawe and Patricia Siatan, the meet's first ever back-to-back winners in 2003, are the old hands competing in the first stop of this meet.

"The old timers better watch out as the newcomers are all raring to show they deserve a place in our tournament," said organizer Tisha Abundo of the Voltz Management Group.

Joining the four winners to the tournament also supported by the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office, Pagcor and Toyota Pasong Tamo are their fellow veterans Lou Maranon and Jackie Montefrio, Rosalina Gomez and Joyce Ann Realeza and Roma Jaro and Joan Namuco.

The newcomers are Suzane Roces and Mary Abigail Escandor, Katherine Rivera and Ginaflor Alanguilan, Diane Destajo and Jennifer Halos and Jenevive Lanuevo and Ola Jade of the PATTS School of Aeronautics, a third placer in the National Capital Region Athletic Association beach volleyball tilt.

Speedo is the event's official outfitter while Mikasa is the official ball.

All the season's winners and their runners-up will figure in a grand championship at the end of the year.

NGAP wants Senate hearing on Pagunsan gripes

THE PRESIDENT of the National Golf Association of the Philippines wants no less than the Senate committee on sports to look into the gripes aired by Juvic Pagunsan against the NGAP when he announced his decision to turn pro last Monday.

"Mr. Pagunsan's statements were blatant lies, to say the least, and a Senate hearing is in order to clear the name of the NGAP that Mr. Pagunsan had so unfairly besmirched," said NGAP president Benny Gopez in a statement yesterday.

Pagunsan had sought the INQUIRER Monday and announced he has decided to quit the national team and turn pro because, among other reasons, "the NGAP doesn't treat its national players like national players."

The 26-year-old amateur ace, a mainstay of the national team since 2001 when he won the individual gold medal in the Malaysia Southeast Asian Games, added he feels NGAP officials "have been treating me and the other national players shabbily."

Gopez said that, if Pagunsan really intended to turn pro as announced, it was "an ugly way to bid farewell from the NGAP, that modesty aside, had nourished and cradled his amateur career, brought him to many places around the world and tremendously helped him hone his skills all these years."

He noted that only last January during an NGAP thanksgiving party, Pagunsan had talked glowingly of the NGAP's crucial role in developing his talent.

"It is interesting, if not puzzling, to note that Mr. Pagunsan is turning pro after he got penalized two strokes in the recent PAL Interclub in Bacolod by Mr. Jake Ayson, the NGAP executive director. The penalty cost Canlubang, Mr. Pagunsan's team, the title, which Southwoods won by two points over Canlubang," Gopez said.

When Pagunsan placed second in the DHL Philippine Open last year at the Riviera Golf Club, Gopez said the NGAP had generously gifted Pagunsan "with something he never expected to come his way."

"We cite this not only to breast-beat but only to show that the NGAP had not been remiss in looking after the welfare of its players, whether they are playing for the country or not, despite budgetary constraints," he said.

Among others, Pagunsan had mentioned several incidents in the last World Amateurs in Puerto Rico which he said showed the poor treatment he and his teammates received from NGAP officials.

He also criticized the NGAP for taking away his Putra Cup slot because officials felt he was not fully prepared for the event when he had just competed in the tough US Amateurs competition.

Superkarting set March 12

A TOUGHER and more exciting karting season unfolds when the 2005 Shell Superkarting Series kicks off March 12-13 at the Carmona Circuit Philippines.

Reigning Karter of the Year Matteo Guidicelli of Cebu Racing Group guns for a back-to-back crown in the Intercon-A Class in this seven-leg series sanctioned by the Automobile Association of the Philippines and sponsored by the Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corp., Denso Iridium Power, Bridgestone by Phil. Allied Ent. Corp., DMCI Homes, Eastway Motorcycle Racing and Aviva Insurance.

Out to challenge Guidicelli are last year's runner-up Marlon Stockinger, Mark Bumgarner of M&M Racing, Indy Villalon of Birel-Fila, Brandon Angel, Marty Aguilar of Bosh-Intelco and reigning Asian Karting queen Michelle Bumgarner.

Cardona joins Welcoat practice

By Marc Anthony Reyes

MARK Cardona, La Salle's electrifying guard who is all set to join the pro ranks next year, is likely to end his amateur career with Welcoat Paints.

PBL board chair Raymund Yu, the Philippine Basktball League board chair, said the 6-foot-2 Cardona has been practising with the Paintmasters in preparation for the PBL Unity Cup slated to start April 2.

Cardona suddenly found himself without a team after La Salle-ICTSI (International Container Terminal Services Inc.) decided to sit out the conference to prepare its players for their title-retention bid in the UAAP.

Incoming team Harbour Center is also interested in getting Cardona's services and build its team around the prolific guard known for his wide head band and knee-high socks.

The Archers will miss their explosive swing man this year after Cardona expressed his desire to join the PBA rookie draft this August.

Cardona will be a welcome addition for Welcoat Paints, which had earlier signed 6-foot-7 Fil-Am Anthony Washington.

Yu said Cardona has yet to sign up with the Paintmasters, although he has been joining the team practice since last week.

Welcoat, a five-time champion in the PBL, is hoping to end a three-year title drought after its big-name stars graduated to the pro league, including Romel Adducul, Paul Artadi, Ronald Tubid and Eddie Laure, who gave the Paintmasters their last championship in 2002.

Welcoat yielded to Montaña Pawnshop in their best-of-five championship duel last year.

In that conference, Cardona reigned as the scoring champion.

Antonio, 7 others lead La Union tilt

SAN FERNANDO CITY, La Union—Grandmaster Rogelio Antonio whipped NM Rustom Tolentino to remain unscathed and share the lead with seven others after the third round of the 4th La Union Open Chess Championships at the Diego Silang Hall, Provincial Capitol here.

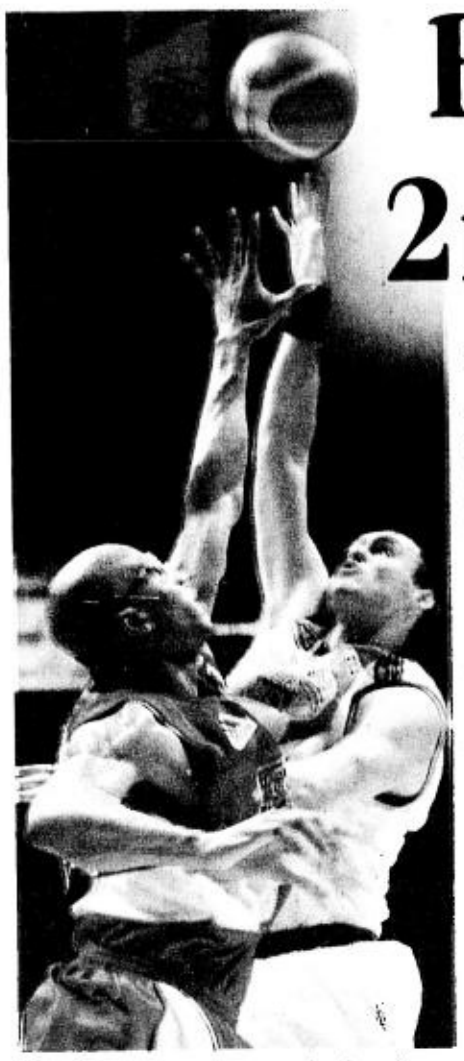
Antonio, the top favorite from Calapan, Oriental, Mindoro pride, prevailed with the black pieces in 45 moves of a Ruy Lopez. He will play against FM Oliver Dimakiling, who beat Eden Diano of Cebu City, in the fourth round.

National Master Samuel Estimo also posted his third straight win at the expense of Woman National Master Rusela Joya.

Estimo, a lawyer, will face World Chess Olympiad silver medalist Grandmaster-candidate Fernie Donguines, who won over NM Eduardo Agagon.

Also with 3.0 points in the meet put up by the local government of La Union through Gov. Victor Ortega and San Fernando City Mayor Mary Jane Ortega are IM Jayson Gonzales, IM Ronald Bancod, NM Oliver Barbosa and NM Andrew Vasquez.

Gonzales trounced NM Nicomedes Alisangco, Bancod nipped Christopher Castellano, Barbosa beat NM Rudy Ibañez, and Vasquez defeated IM Chito Garma. NM Marlon Bernardino



SAN MIGUEL'S Chris Burgess hooks a shot off Jaja Richards of Coca-Cola. AUGUST DELA CRUZ

Beermen clinch 2nd straight win

By June Navarro

CHRIS Burgess was a scoring flop but a healthy Danny Seigle and a hot-shooting Dondon Hontiveros took over the offensive show for San Miguel Beer last night.

Seigle pumped in 29 points and Hontiveros added 22 as the Beermen subdued the Coca-Cola Tigers, 88-77, for their second straight victory in the Gran Matador PBA Fiesta Conference at the Araneta Coliseum.

Hounded by Coca-Cola's Jaja Richards throughout, the 6-foot-10 Burgess finished with just 12 points and 18 rebounds, which paled compared with his 22-point, 22-rebound output during the Beermen's 82-73 victory over the Alaska Aces during the opener.

"We're not thinking of replacing him (Burgess) as of this moment," said San Miguel Beer coach Jong Uichico after sending the Tigers to their first loss after an opening-day win over Sta. Lucia Realty.

"It's actually not what the statistics show. It's what he (Burgess) brings to the team that's important. He definitely fits into our system."

Danny Ildefonso came in plainclothes for the second straight game after undergoing an operation to remove bone spurs on his right heel.

Ildefonso's absence, however, was hardly missed as Seigle and Hontiveros—and, in some stretches, Nic Belasco and Olsen Racela—gave the Beermen enough firepower to defang the Tigers.

"We have great individual players but they're trying to sacrifice their individual talents just to play as one cohesive unit," said Uichico.

John Arigo scored 24 points while Richards atoned for a disappointing debut by banging in 20 points and grabbing 16 boards for the Tigers.

In the second game, Kenneth Duremdes had 36 points on a 7-of-11 clip from the field and added 10 rebounds as Sta. Lucia dumped Alaska, 85-77.

The scores:

First Game

SAN MIGUEL 88—Seigle 29, Hontiveros 22, Burgess 12, Racela 10, Belasco 6, Villoria 4, Lopez 3, Menle 2, Pena 0.

COCA-COLA 77—Arigo 24, Richards 20, Peek 12, Reavis 10, Avenido 4, Bacani 4, Abarrientos 3, Julnio 0, Antonio 0.

Quarters: 31-23, 51-41, 66-62, 88-77.

Second Game

STA. LUCIA 85—Duremdes 36, Brown 17, Espino 10, Mendoza 7, Aquino 6, Onolon 5, Tolomia 2, Demape 2, Cuan 0, Agapito 0, Gonzales 0.

ALASKA 77—Carlaso 26, Derricks 14, Cablay 12, Thoss 9, Hugnatan 6, Allado 4, Hawkins 3, Wilson 3, Johnson 0, Locsin 0.

Quarters: 26-20, 50-33, 67-49, 85-77

It's boom or bust for RP five—Reyes

By Dennis U. Eroa,
Inquirer Libre Sports editor

FOR outspoken national men's basketball coach Vincent 'Chot' Reyes, there's no middle ground. It's either boom or bust.

That's why, Reyes doesn't hold his punches when the topic veers toward bringing back the glory of Philippine basketball.

"There's no middle ground. Either the Philippine campaign is going to be a spectacular success or a spectacular failure," Reyes said.

Reyes, who is also the president and founder of coachcom. inc., recently spoke before Philippine Daily Inquirer officers headed by Sandy Prieto-Romualdez at the PDI boardroom in Makati City.

His topic was "Coaching: Soul of execution." It's about the importance of coaching to squeeze the best from the workforce.

Reyes knows that his task is awesome.

For one, he will try to end 36 years of frustration and steer the Philippines on the road back to the Olympic basketball competition in 2008 in Beijing.

The Philippines last competed in the 1972 Munich Olympics. That team featured Bogs Adornado, Jimmy Mariano, Marte Samson, Danny Florencio, Narciso Bernardo, Freddie Webb, Yoyong Martirez and the late Ed Ocampo and Tembong Melencio. The late Ignacio 'Ning' Ramos coached the team to 13th place with a 3-6 record in the event controversially won by the former Soviet Union over the US.

"Coaching the national team is a risk. This can even end my career," said Reyes.

The Philippines will try to crash the Olympics when it competes in the 2007 ABC Championships which may be held in the country. The Nationals need to finish no lower than second in a field composed of Asian superpower China and South Korea. Iran, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia and Kazakhstan are also tough to beat.

Fesfi holds tennis, swimming camps at Splash Island

SPLASH Island, the country's biggest water park, and Metro Rail Transit have agreed to give their support to the Fil-Estate Sports Foundation Inc. summer tennis and swimming camps beginning April 2 at the Manila Southwoods Sports Club in Carmona, Cavite.

Fesfi chair Robert John L. Sobrepeña lauded the support given by Splash Island and MRT to the summer tennis and swimming camps, saying their assistance will go a long way in "fulfilling the foundation's long-term goal of producing world-class athletes in sports where the Filipinos can truly excel."

Sobrepeña said the assistance given by Splash and MRT is truly commendable and that he hopes other private corporations will follow the example of the two providing a much-needed helping hand to local sports.

To ensure quality training, Fesfi again tapped former RP David Cup team captain Manny Tecson and Melbourne Olympian Gertrudes "Tuding" Lozada to handle the summer tennis and swimming for the second straight year.

Tecson wil conduct tennis classes at the Manila Southwoods Sports Club in Carmona, Cavite, and Bramante Tennis Courts in Renaissance Center in Pasig City from April 2-24 and May 7-29 while Lozada will hold a two-part swimming clinic at the Manila Southwoods from April 3 to May 22 (Sundays only).

For inquiries, call Manny/Linda Tecson at 9389522 and 9394851 (tennis), Lozada at 8052780 (swimming) or Jerry Tripulca at 0917-8981516.

The tennis clinic by Tecson is divided into beginners, intermediate, advanced, competitive (part-time) and competitive (full-time). Rates are P3,000 for beginners and intermediate/advanced, and P5,000 for full-time/competitive.

The swimming camp by Lozada offers basic/water safety lessons to beginners and advanced/competitive lectures for serious swimmers. Rates are P4,000 for basic/water safety, and P5,000 for advanced/competitve.

The camps are supported by R.R. Payumo and Partners, Camp John Hay, Manila Southwoods Manor Hotel, Wilson Sports, Accel Sports Wear and GASPEED Motorshop.

ZAMBOANGA striker Dikmen Furkan's short blast is foiled by NCR's goalkeeper at the Don Gregorio Pelaez Sports Center in Cagayan de Oro city.

Negros, NCR booters seek finals berths

CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY.—The four surviving teams are expected to provide quality football action when the 2005 PFF-adidas National Men's Championship resumes today at the Don Gregorio Pelaez Sports Center here.

Group A's top qualifier Laguna, powered by Philippine Army players, battles Negros Occidental-Victorias Sardines at 8 a.m., while defending champion NCR-Philippine Navy—which scored the most number of goals in topping Group B—faces Davao in the other match of the crossover semis set at 3 p.m.

"*Magandang laban ito* (This is a good fight," said Negros coach Norman Fegidero. "We can't take Laguna lightly because it has experienced players from the Army in their roster."

The Negrenses' semis bid almost fizzled out yesterday in the face of Zamboanga eleven's relentless stance. Zambo's Turk import Dikmen Furman struck fear at Negros' bench when he hit the back of the net in a volley that was nullified by the referee for an offside violation.

"I don't think that was offside because Dikmen had already moved back but it was the referee's decision anyway," said Zambo coach Salih Allian.

The Negros-Zamboanga match ended in a scoreless draw, giving Negros Occidental the ticket to the next stage.

NCR advanced trouble-free, making mincemeat of Quezon province, 4-0, with goals by RP team star striker Ali Borromeo (9th minute), Jose Alfe Caminos (15th), Jimmy Doña (34th) and Lyndon Zamora (54th).

The match also sent two Quezon defenders into the injury list.

Christian Salanguit was taken to hospital with a broken nose, while Hamilton Mitre dislocated his right shoulder.

Chan tops underbone series kickoff leg

CARMONA, Cavite—Jeffrey Chan of Hirano Racing-Norkis Yamaha opened the 2005 motorsports season with a bang by ruling the kickoff leg of the 2004 Shell Advance Super Underbone Series at the Carmona Racing Circuit here Sunday.

Riding a brand-new Crypton Z 125cc, Chan bested Hirano-Norkis teammate John Lerry Enriquez and Rizaldo Canare to capture top honors in the annual series being organized by the EL Racing Tech in cooperation with Shell Advance for the eighth straight year.

The 26-year-old campaigner from Caloocan City, who is making a comeback after an absence of six years, led from start to finish in beating Enriquez, Canare, Bryan Roxas and Irvin Ongsee in the 12-lap race.

The win enabled Chan to take the headstart in the 10-part series being held to determine the Philippine representatives to the Yamaha Asean Cup 2005 scheduled in Thailand. Chan also finished second to Enriquez in the 110-open category.

Sharing the limelight was Mario Suba, who swept both the Yamaha 50cc and Honda 50cc over Erwin Ongse and Small Monkey, respectively. The second leg is set April 24.

DE Ramos negotiates one of three tough tracks.

Monte de Ramos wins

CAGAYAN de Oro Off-Roaders' Albert Monte de Ramos ruled the 1st stop of the Delo Sports National Extreme 4x4 Series 2005 at the Robinsons Lot J, Catolico, Barangay Lagao National Highway in General Santos City.

Monte de Ramos conquered the three tracks with precision, totaling a best time of 12 minutes and 29.52 seconds to beat 4x4 GenSan's Ferdinand Caraygay (13:29.57).

Monte de Ramos was at his best on Track A, where he blasted the field with a ride of 3 minutes, 24.37 seconds.

Sanctioned by the National Association of Filipino Off-Roaders and jointly hosted by GenSan 4x4 Fun Club, 4 Wheelers Dadiangas and 4x4 GenSan, the event is sponsored by Caltex Delo Sports, a synthetic-based engine oil designed for gasoline or diesel-powered SUVs and 4x4s.

Michael Cerin ranked fourth with a time of 14:38.61, a notch below Bicol Off Roaders' Ramon Uy, who clocked 14:37.29.

BANGKOK-BOUND: NCRFA president Pocholo Borromeo (2nd from left) presents trophy to most valuable player Michael Sharpe after Makati Football Club blanked La Salle Greenhills FC, 2-0, recently to rule the Nike under-15 Manchester United Premier Cup football tournament at the Ateneo field. Also shown are coach Ignacio Vicente, Tomas Locano and players of MFC, which earned the right to represent the Philippines in the regional finals in Bangkok in May.

MPC hosts polo meet

THE 2ND Fila Summer Polo Cup will be held on March 13, 2 p.m., at the Manila Polo Club.

The low-goal game, divided into four chukkers, will be a round-robin competition among three teams.

Jose Constantino, Jimboy Dulay, Rossana Yuko, and Ace Suzuki make up the first team. The second team is composed of Antonio Veloso, Jose Manuel Montilla, Jun Eusebio and Jerome Hernandez. Anthony Filamor leads the team composed of Fed Borromeo, Edwin Arce and Fred Borromeo.

Umpires for the game are Hank Jacinto, Dino Santos and Santi Elizalde.

The high-goal polo match is set to take place after the round robin. The team of Inigo Zobel, Vince Bitong, Jay De Jesus and Santi Elizalde with a team handicap of five goals will take on the team of Bobby Aguirre, Anthony Garcia, Dino Santos and Dondi Santos with a team handicap of six goals.

Umpires for the high-goal match are Jose Constantino, Hank Jacinto and Ace Suzuki.

Italian giant Fila is the official outfitter of the event.

Southwoods' sweetest

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza

THE FIRST time wasn't that sweet. The opposition was puny. Also-rans.

Thus, the second one was not only sweet. It was the sweetest of them all. "Sweeter than a honeycomb," if I may quote a line from a Bee Gees hit.

In 1999, Manila Southwoods won the PAL Interclub when the established clubs like Canlubang and Luisita weren't around.

Six years later, meaning this year, Southwoods won again. This time, Canlubang and Luisita, and emerging powerhouse and the surprise 2004 champion Del Monte, were present.

It had not come that easily.

Although Southwoods was ahead from the very beginning, it found itself digging out of a hole in the homestretch to escape disaster.

Tied with Del Monte and four over fancied Canlubang with one round to go in the four-day PAL Interclub, Southwoods leaned on sheer talent that, with luck also playing a key role, weathered all sorts of odds to become champion in the 58th edition of the nation's unofficial club championship.

"How sweet it is," said Southwoods' team captain Thirdy Escaño, who found Artemio Murakami crying on his shoulder in the din of the dramatic victory.

Said Southwoods golf director Jeric Hechanova: "It began with the first man saving himself with a last-hole eagle, but it boiled down to the second-to-last shot of our last man."

With Del Monte bowing out of the fight early on the last day, Southwoods had only Canlubang to contend with.

After Southwoods had increased its 4-point margin to 11 over Canlubang in the middle of the final round, a leak would soon spring on the Southwoods tank.

Before long, the lead was chopped to 5. And then to 1.

With Southwoods' last man standing (Michael Bibat) battling Canlubang's most dangerous player for the day (homegrown talent JR Tanpinco), the Southwoods-Canlubang duel came down literally to the last man, to the last hole.

If the eagle of Southwoods' first man Tonlits Asistio on 18 was the stuff that makes champions out of everyday people, the birdie of Southwoods' last man Bibat on 18 was the stuff that makes legends out of ordinary mortals.

Asistio, 15, made eagle while merely trying to play out of the woods on the par-5, 18th.

Lucky?

Uh-oh. How many times has it been said that when you are good, you are lucky?

Bibat, 20, hitting his second shot fat to barely clear the second ditch on 18, fired a 280-yard, 3-wood shot that glowed in the afternoon sun. The ball bounced jerkily before the green, rolling frenziedly and then stopping 8 feet from the cup.

If Tanpinco, who had a 25-footer for birdie, made the putt, that would more or less put Canlubang mathematically close to forging a tie for the lead with Southwoods.

But he missed it, giving Bibat the luxury of making two putts to ensure Southwoods' victory in six years. Bibat made birdie for the final 2-point margin over Canlubang.

Almost just as fast, Canlubang's supporters went to town recalling the 2-stroke penalty slapped Canlubang's Juvic Pagunsan the day before by rulesman Jake Ayson. Had the penalty not happened, they argued, Canlubang and Southwoods would have been tied at the end of the tournament and officials would have gone to the score of the fifth man to break the deadlock.

Ayson said he penalized Pagunsan two strokes after Pagunsan had admitted to him an infraction that Juvic's caddy had committed: Pagunsan's caddy stood behind his line of play when Juvic made a putt at nearby Binitin.

"He admitted to me his (Pagunsan) mistake so, he incurred a two-stroke penalty," said Jake. "My conscience is clear."

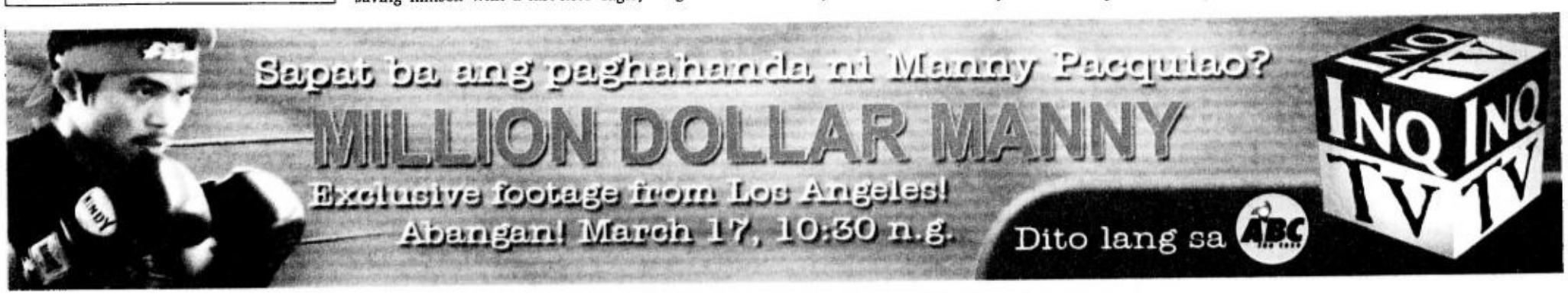
"Mr. Ayson's decision stands because the tournament committee did not receive any protest to merit a review of Mr. Ayson's decision," said Buddy Resurreccion, Ayson's fellow rulesman who was a member of the Committee chaired by Domeng Duerme.

In any sport, penalties are part of the game. To say one team, or one man, lost because of a penalty is the crudest logic one can ever think of.

Very elementary, my lord.

***

FASTBREAK. Today at Sta. Elena, Wellington C. Soong, chair and president of Jaguar Philippines Inc., will play host to a select group of Jaguar and Land Rover friends in an 18-hole round at the famed Sta. Rosa, Laguna, layout. Wellington will stake the Jaguar X-Type, 2.0L V6 as a hole-in-one prize. What a host!...The remains of Rod Feliciano's adoptive mother, Carolina Feliciano Gueco, were laid to rest yesterday in Magalang, Pampanga. To Tito Rod, my deepest condolences.



Yankees don't mind poor Big Unit debut

NEW YORK—Randy Johnson's much-anticipated Yankees debut wasn't filled with awesome fastballs or knee-buckling sliders—and no one seemed to mind.

After all, New York acquired him for October.

Johnson worked two innings Tuesday in an 8-2 loss to the Atlanta Braves at Kissimmee, Florida. He threw 36 pitches, 22 for strikes, and gave up a two-run homer to old nemesis Chipper Jones in an uneven performance.

"It looked like his first spring outing," Jones said. "I don't think anybody in baseball expected him to come out blowing 97. A guy like Randy's got to get his feet under him, just like the rest of us. He'll be on his game come Oct. 1."

Johnson said he felt fine physically after being scratched from his first scheduled start last week because of a tight left calf.

After opening with a strikeout, Johnson allowed a single to Brian Jordan and fell behind 2-0 on Jones before the Braves' third baseman drove a 148-kph (92-mph) fastball over the left-field fence.

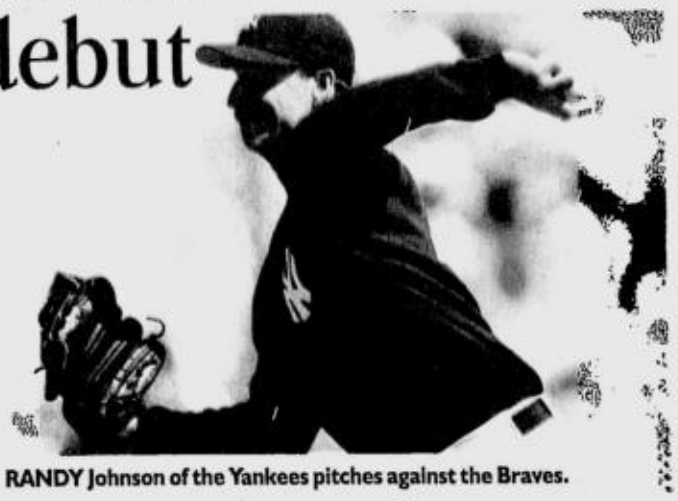
The Yankees didn't start pursuing Johnson last summer just to add a few wins during the regular season. They pushed to finally complete a drawn-out trade with Arizona in January because they needed an ace in the postseason.

And nobody sounded worried about the 41-year-old Johnson losing his first outing of spring training.

"I know I still have a long way to go to be ready for opening day," Johnson said.

In Tucson, Arizona, Luis Gonzalez made his first start since undergoing season-ending elbow surgery in August, and pinch-hitter Tony Clark hit a three-run double for Arizona in a 10-2 win over a split squad of Oakland Athletics.

"My mechanics weren't quite what I've been working on," Gonzalez said. "Just getting the ball in was good enough for me. It's nice to be back out on the field." *AP*



RANDY Johnson of the Yankees pitches against the Braves.

SPORTSWATCH

Golf tilt benefits cancer survivors

A FUND-RAISING tournament dubbed "Supporting Cancer Survivors Through Golf" tees off on April 5 at the Mount Malarayat Golf and Country Club in Lipa City. Organized by Filsports Marketing and Promotions for the benefit of the Madre de Amor Foundation, the 18-hole event expects the roster to easily surpass 150 players. Tickets sold for P2,500 each will go a long way in helping the Madre de Amor Foundation continue its work in serving the terminally-ill cancer patients. The Madre de Amor Foundation compound in Los Baños, Laguna houses several dozen cancer patients and survivors, all of them are being treated by volunteer physicians and health workers. Ticket inquiries can be made at 8238295 or (0922) 3450810.

ESPN backs tsunami relief

ESPN will team up with some of the world's best X-gamers to support tsunami relief efforts with the inaugural Thailand X Games in Bangkok, March 24-27. The event, which will take place at Huamak Stadium in Bangkok, will feature demonstrations by several former and current X Games champions. To help raise awareness of the devastation caused by the tsunami and to support relief efforts in Thailand, ESPN Inc., ESPN Star Sports, and the athletes will donate a portion of the proceeds from the event to the Rajaprajanugroh Foundation. The Foundation's beneficiaries include children who were orphaned in the wake of the tsunami tragedy.

Abiera scores 4th ace

MIKE Abiera scored his fourth career hole-in-one last March on No. 5 of the Masters course of the Manila Southwoods Golf and Country Club. Abiera, a former club champion of Alabang, used an LB280 6-iron and a Dunlop Loco No. 5 ball in acing the 186-yard Masters No. 5 for the second time. Witnessing the feat was his regular golfing buddies Marty Ilagan, twin brother Lito and Ferdie Agustin.

PCU leads ping-pong winners

PHILIPPINE Christian University (PCU) standouts Rochelle Pacana and Emerson Fajardo captured the men's and women's crowns in the third Obey Your Serve Table Tennis invitational championship at the University of Asia and the Pacific gym. Pacana relied on her backspins to beat counterpart Annabele Comendador, 3-1, for the women's singles title. Fajardo rallied past Japhet Adasa, 3-2, to take home the men's singles diadem. In the team event organized by former Table Tennis Association of the Philippines secretary general Oskie Santilices, Sheila Sy and Renee Roan Chua, powerhouse Ateneo De Manila University and PCU grabbed the women and men's title, respectively.

Young lady karter eyes tough tests

YOUNG lady karter Alessandra Madrigal of Alessandra Racing-PCR is ready to face tough challenges ahead as the 2005 National Karting season kicks off on March 12 and 13 at Carmona Circuit Philippines. The 9-year-old Madrigal will not only race in the local national series this year but will also compete in prestigious karting races in the Asian region. And with the vital support of principal sponsor ING bank, major sponsor Globe Gizmo and co-sponsors Dickies and Petron, Alessandra hopes to raise the country's flag high in the international circuit. After ruling all the five races she joined in the Cadet 60 class, Alessandra is setting her eyes on the Cadet 85 crown this year. On March 27, she will be making her debut in the international scene as she flies to Bangkok to compete against the best in the Thailand national karting series. Vital infos, race schedules and updates are on www.alessandraracing.com.

Uno badminton anniversary tilt

UNO SPORTS Badminton will be holding its 1st Anniversary Badminton Tournament on April 09. Categories are Men's Doubles, Ladies' Doubles and Mixed Doubles. Leveling dates are Mar. 12, Mar. 19 and Apr. 2. Leveling time is 5 p.m. onwards. For more details please call 8743687, 09177634529, 09178912000 or 09274856524. Uno Sports Badminton is located at Capitoline Hills Road, BF Resort Village, Las Piñas City

Empire King, Cover Girl renew rivalry

RACE track champs and archrivals Empire King and Cover Girl are set to clash anew on Sunday, March 13, in the P1 Million Philracom Commissioners Cup, a race in honor of former Philippine racing Commissioner Francisco Cayco at the San Lazaro Leisure Park in Carmona, Cavite. Empire King got even with Cover Girl, who came in second, with his victory in the just concluded Freedom Cup at the SLLP. They have now four wins each. Others joining the hunt for the top prize in the 1,750-meter race are Chariot of Fire, Free Wind, Ghurka, Moab, Paramount, Scrap of Gold, Shadowfox, Speed O'War and West Bound. The winner is guaranteed to take home the top prize of P600,0000.

Big Dome hosts big NCA event

AFTER winning the first leg of 2005 World Slasher Cup, popular cocker-sportsman Jun Santiago shoots for another major title when the National Cockers Association (NCA) 7-Cock Derby sizzles at the Araneta Coliseum. Santiago's Joe Firefly Thunderbird 12 (in partnership with Boy Jiao and Jingco Brothers), the same entry that won the World Slasher Cup last January, racked up three excellent victories in last Tuesday's qualifying round. Also with three wins are Mayor Nic Patenia and the Jingco Brothers. But threateningly close are the likes of Patrick Antonio, John Capinpin and Ruel Ricafort, who tallied 2.5 points each. The next NCA derby will be on Apr. 5 and 7. For details, call 9113101 and 9112928.

Small cockers join Daytime Derby

SMALL-TIME cockers and breeders will aim for the guaranteed prize of P400,000 in the upcoming Daytime 3-Cock Derby on March 31 at the Sta. Ana Cockpit (AP Reyes Avenue, Makati City). Entry fee is only P5,500. Also awaiting the winners are cash prizes and appliances for fastest wins. Promoters Kags Paliza and Aba Badiola of Mandaluyong, the event's hosts, recently held the 596-entry PSG Fastest Kill Challenge. The top five winners were Noel Socoral and Manuel Romero of Pasig, Zaldy Namoro, Elmo Castillo, Herman Moral, and Walter Joeber of Laguna. For inquiries, call 898-3474 and 8983475 or 09189251121.

Warriors slay 76ers

Cavs usher in new ownership, rout Magic

PHILADELPHIA—Jason Richardson scored 22 points and Mike Dunleavy added 21 Tuesday to lead the Golden State Warriors to just their eighth road win of the season with a 104-85 victory over the tired Philadelphia 76ers.

Troy Murphy scored 17 points and Mickael Pietrus had 14 for the Warriors, who are in last place in the Pacific Division.

"We kept making shots, getting stops and never really let them go on a big run to let the crowd get into it," Dunleavy said.

Allen Iverson led Philadelphia with 33 points on 10-for-25 shooting, but had 12 turnovers. The Sixers played their sixth game in eight days, with all the games played as back-to-backs. They went 3-3 during the stretch.

For the third straight game, Chris Webber was basically a non-factor for the Sixers. Webber finished with eight points on 3-for-12 shooting.

"This is Philadelphia, the toughest place in the world," said Iverson. "I told him what to expect. I let him know they would expect him to be like the Chris Webber he was."

In Cleveland, LeBron James scored 23 points and Drew Gooden had 23 in his return to the Cavaliers' starting lineup to help his team snap a six-game losing streak with a 11-92 rout of the Orlando Magic.

Cheered on by music star Usher, one of their new owners, the Cavaliers won for the first time since Feb. 23. James added eight assists and seven rebounds.

In New York, improving to 5-1 since the trade deadline, the Knicks received 19 points from Jamal Crawford and solid all-around contributions from several players to defeat the Washington Wizards, 93-83.

Crawford also had six assists and six rebounds, Kurt Thomas added 15 points, 11 rebounds and four assists, and Stephon Marbury had 14 points, 10 assists and four rebounds.

The Knicks are now eight games under .500, the closest they've been to the break-even point since Jan. 31.

The Wizards, led by 27 points from Larry Hughes and 23 from Gilbert Arenas, were without All-star Antawn Jamison for the first time all season. Jamison, whose streak of 386 consecutive games came to an end, has tendinitis in his right knee.

In Milwaukee, Mo Williams had 22 points and 10 assists, and Desmond Mason also scored 22 points as the Bucks tripped the Atlanta Hawks, 105-101.

Tyronn Lue had a season-high 27 points for Atlanta, losers of 22 straight road games and 12 in a row overall.

Lue, averaging 9 points per game, was 11-of-19 from the floor, and Al Harrington had 19 points and nine assists for the Hawks.

In Minneapolis, Kevin Garnett scored 22 of his 30 points in the second half to deny the Charlotte Bobcats a season sweep of Minnesota Timberwolves via a 102-97 decision.

Garnett, who also had 15 rebounds and four blocks, led a dominating third-quarter effort as the Timberwolves shook off a sluggish first half to win their third in a row and fourth in five games.

In San Antonio, Tim Duncan made a quick return to the Spurs lineup after leaving his last game with an injury, and had 19 points and eight rebounds as the Spurs whipped the New Jersey Nets, 90-74.

Reserve guard Devin Brown had a game-high 22 points for the Spurs, who expected Duncan to miss this game after leaving Sunday's win against Utah with a sprained right ankle less than four minutes into the second half.

In Salt Lake City, Stephen Jackson scored 30 points and the Indiana Pacers rallied after blowing a 25-point lead to frustrate the Utah Jazz, 89-83.

Reggie Miller finished with 24 points in his final game at Utah, which nearly turned into an embarrassing loss.

In Sacramento, California, Mike Bibby's long 3-pointer as time expired was upheld on a controversial video review as the Kings edged the Memphis Grizzlies, 85-82.

Peja Stojakovic's inbound pass with 1.4 seconds left was tipped by James Posey, but the clock didn't start until Bibby grabbed the ball, turned and hit an amazing 3-pointer from several feet behind the line.

While the sellout crowd erupted and the Kings fled the court, the Grizzlies pointed out the tardy clock. But after a lengthy review, the officials decided they couldn't change what happened—and the basket stood in the Kings' 14th consecutive home victory over the Grizzlies, whose four-game winning streak was snapped.

In Seattle, Tracy McGrady had 35 points and Yao Ming added 16 of his 22 points in the second half to lead the Houston Rockets to a dramatic 97-95 squeaker over the SuperSonics.

Houston outscored the Sonics 22-6 in the third period—with those six points setting franchise records for both teams. It was the fewest points the Rockets had ever allowed in a quarter, as well as Seattle's lowest in a quarter.

In Los Angeles, Corey Maggette scored 30 points, Elton Brand had 22 points and 15 rebounds, and the Clippers beat the Lakers, 110-101, despite Kobe Bryant's 41 points.

Bobby Simmons added 16 points, Chris Kaman scored 12 and Rick Brunson had 10 for the Clippers (27-34), who won for just the fourth time in 15 games and beat the Lakers for only the fifth time in the last 33 games between the teams. *AP*

LEBRON James pleases Cleveland's new owners with a sterling performance. REUTERS

CEREMONIAL TEE-OFF Bob Sobrepeña, chair of Camp John Hay, hits the ceremonial tee off for the 17th Philippine Corporate Cup at the Camp John Hay Golf Club in Baguio City. Looking on are, from left, Baguio Mayor Braulio Yaranon and Corporate Cup founder Cecil Hechanova. The tourney featuring a record field of 240 players ends today.

P. Princesa joins Velo Challenge

MAYOR Edward Hagedorn added a Puerto Princesa City team to the First Philippine Velo Challenge which kicks off March 19 at the newly-refurbished Amoranto Velodrome in Quezon City.

Hagedorn adopted one of six teams vying in the Velo Challenge, an event that significantly revives track cycling in the country and which is geared toward the 23rd Southeast Asian Games.

Team Puerto Princesa thus competes against Team MayniLA of Mayor Lito Atienza and Ali Atienza and Tagaytay International Convention Center of Mayor Abraham "Bambol" Tolentino in the event that is part of the SEA Games calendar of PhilCycling, headed by Customs Commissioner Bert Lina.

The event has as presenters Atty. Jose Miguel Arroyo through the First Gentleman's Foundation of Sports and Air21 and Tour Pilipinas of Lito Alvarez.

Chair Efraim Genuino of the Philippine Amusements and Gaming Corp., cycling's "godfather" for the SEA Games, has also poured in his support to the competition among the country's Elite (national men's and women's team members), juniors, executives, masters and veterans.

Renovation of the Amorato Velodrome has been approved by Philippine Sports Commission officer-in-charge William Ramirez for the Velo Challenge, which also has as major backers Isuzu D-Max—the Philippines' No. 1 Pickup—and Sportivo, Sharp Phils., San Miguel Corp., Elixir Bike Shop, Vittoria Tires and Intrasports.

PGA raises alarm on golfers' appearance fees

PALM BEACH GARDENS, Florida—Offering golf-star clients for corporate sponsor outings for appearance fees has put International Management Group at odds with US PGA Tour officials, the Sun-Sentinel newspaper reported.

Such stars as Fiji's Vijay Singh, South Africa's Retief Goosen, Spain's Sergio Garcia and Ireland's Padraig Harrington are IMG clients who were paid for a corporate outing last week before the Ford Championship at Doral.

PGA officials confirmed to the newspaper that IMG's plan, outlined in a letter to tournament directors, would offer price tags for appearances by stars in what could be a loophole in PGA rules against such financial guarantees.

The world's most powerful sports agent and money management firm offers to organize Monday corporate outings at PGA events.

Such events would be like those last week at Doral, where Singh, Harrington, Goosen and Garcia received a total of between $500,000 and $600,000 to play alongside tourney sponsor Ford's executives and dealers.

IMG assured tournament directors that anyone booked for a Monday event would "look favorably upon staying for the tournament, which would enhance the strength of field," a tournament director who received IMG's offer told the newspaper.

Two tiers of players were being pitched by IMG, the director said, with Singh, Garcia, Goosen, South Africa's Ernie Els, Davis Love and fan favorite John Daly reservable for between $100,000 and $200,000 dollars.

Going at a relative bargain price of between $50,000 and $100,000 dollars were Canada's Mike Weir, Sweden's Jesper Parnevik and Americans Fred Couples, David Duval and Jim Furyk.

While appearance fees are strictly forbidden, corporate outings have no outright bans. The US PGA allows title sponsors to host corporate outings but only if they are not used as inducements to lure players to specific events.

"We have had conversations with IMG and made them aware this is in violation of our player regulations and tournament contracts," PGA Tour senior vice president and chief of operations Henry Hughes told the Sun-Sentinel. "We will take a hard stance on this." *AFP*

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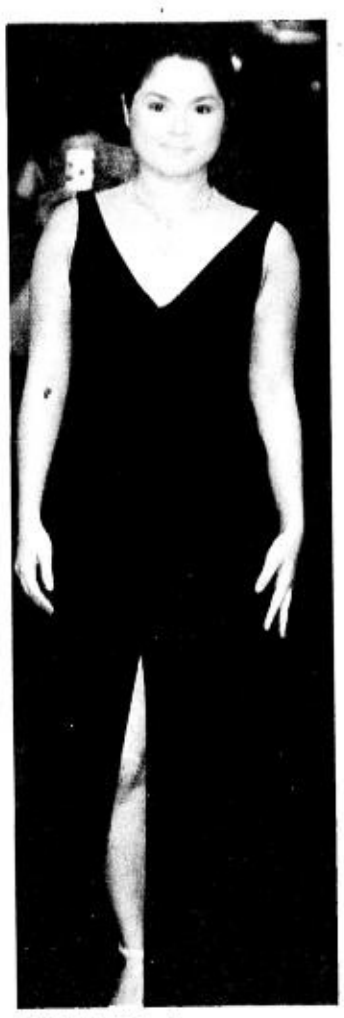
MARICEL Soriano



JUDY ANN Santos

ARA MINA

SUNSHINE Dizon

Improved fashion sense

Majority of the stars at the Golden Screen Awards night turned up in appropriate outfits

By Alex Y. Vergara
Photos by Karl Sumbeling

BLACK and certain dark colors were relegated to supporting roles at the recent Golden Screen Awards, as not a few of Tinseltown's leading ladies opted to wear gowns in delicious shades and prints as if to herald the coming summer. And for a change, the celebrities who bothered to attend the fledgling event made up for its lack of star power by dressing up in something appropriate (*matino*) this time. Progress, at last!

Those who dared don dark hues included Maricel Soriano, Iza Calzado, Donita Rose and Judy Ann Santos, who looked more like a trophy girl than a Best Actress winner in a black V-necked outfit with a long slit in front.

Judy Ann stuck to the clean, mature look by wearing her hair up and confining the glitter to several jewelry pieces on her neck and ankles (yes, not one but two shining anklets peeked from beneath that slit). In fairness to the vertically challenged young star, she looked surprisingly svelte in her minimalist gown, especially next to a healthy, but still shapely Ara Mina.

Judy Ann's gambit to look understated paid off, as she later beat acting heavyweights Nora Aunor and Vilma Santos—who wore a hot pink corset and serpentine skirt—for the top acting plum.

Ara wore a strapless, semi-beaded number in refreshing sea green. Again, the gown proved to be a safe choice, since the cut and color flattered her. Filipinos like their leading ladies voluptuous, but if Ara ballooned any further, her days as a sexy star would be over. Time to hit the gym!

Donita showed some cleavage in a layered, tiered and semi-frayed chiffon number in black with floral beadwork on the sleeves, bodice and skirt. Unlike a number of female hosts in the past, she wisely stuck to a single look all throughout the entire evening.

Her chosen outfit was neither inappropriate nor outstanding. But if it were the gauge of how Donita dresses up these days, then she has turned a bit dowdy compared to her days as a hip MTV VJ. And to think she got hitched less than two years ago.

In keeping with her song number, Maricel, who paid tribute to good friend and former leading man Fernando Poe Jr., also went minimalist in a navy blue off-shoulder column that draped her chest and upper arms. Alas, the "Diamond Star" took the austere act a bit too far by shunning jewelry.

For the first time in recent memory, Iza dared to bare her tightly guarded upper arms in a black halter gown with tiny ruffles and crisscross detail that draped her chest. We've seen her in better gowns, but with a face as lovely as hers, she can never go completely wrong.

What does a jealous wife do when trapped in the same room as the object of her ire? Making a scene would have been so last millennium. Thus, Sunshine Cruz, the aggrieved, Bible-quoting wife, did the next best thing: she held on to her man as she tried to outdress the competition in Eric Pineda's willowy, electric-pleated gown in shades of yellow, orange and hot pink.

Its supposed strapless top in canary yellow was adorned with a halter made from the same fabric as the skirt. The gown came sans any embellishment save for an obscure red brooch pinned to the left side of the former bombshell's slim waist. For her efforts, Sunshine went home as "Star of the Night."

Thankfully, the supposed other woman (and alleged victim of the wife's nasty text messages), Juliana Palermo, was no pushover. She made heads turn as she glided across the lobby of the Carlos P. Romulo Auditorium in a masterfully draped, Grecian-inspired hot pink creation that left very little to the imagination.

Larry Espinosa, the designer, reportedly advised his muse to shun any manner of underwear, as they left unsightly panty lines. Juliana gamely obliged. Her pains weren't in vain as a swarm of paparazzi snapped her from every angle.

Juliana arrived with good friend and fellow bold star Diana Zubiri, who was reduced to playing second fiddle. Not that Diana looked bad in Espinosa's strapless red gown with a corset bodice and tassel-embellished skirt. The taller Juliana, or at least her barely-there outfit, simply made for better copy.

At last, Sunshine Dizon and Karylle, who, incidentally, is beginning to look and even sound more and more like her mom Zsa Zsa Padilla, are starting to finally learn to dress their age. The two young stars came in their printed halter dress ideal for a hot and carefree summer evening.

An olive-skinned Sunshine went for big and Pucci-esque patterns, while Karylle chose a textured fabric with dainty floral prints. Unlike more established stars, they didn't have to play safe by hiding behind the absence of color to make a statement.

(e-mail the author at avergara@inquirer.com.ph)

VILMA Santos

IZA Calzado

DIANA Zubiri

LOTLOT De Leon

SUNSHINE Cruz with husband, Cesar Montano

DONITA Rose

WHO'S THAT GIRL? Juliana Palermo, top head turner

CHERRY Pie Picache

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Best Actress HILARY SWANK
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Best Supporting Actor MORGAN FREEMAN
"You virtually only have to type Morgan Freeman's name and the phrase 'remarkable performance' nearly follows automatically. Freeman doesn't play a part so much as inhabit it." HENRY SHEEHAN / KCET-TV
MILLION DOLLAR BABY

Impossible, says Cogie's friend

DOLLYWOOD
Dolly Ann Carvajal

IN MY previous column, I hinted that **Cogie Domingo** may have gotten the daughter of Pinoy rock luminary **Pepe Smith** pregnant. Someone privy to the young actor's secrets called me up saying she does not believe that Cogie is capable of such mischief.

"Cogie is extremely shy, to the point of being *torpe*," the friend said, "so it's really *malabo that may mabuntis siya* (unlikely that he will get a girl pregnant). He never mentioned seeing the daughter of Pepe Smith. What I know is type *niyang ligawan* (he wanted to court) **Angel Locsin** but *naunahan siya ni* **Oyo Boy Sotto** (was quicker to the draw). That's how slow he is with girls."

But teenage girls making the first move are not unheard of these days so it's really a tricky matter. Could the little birdie that broke the news to me turn out to be a stork in nine months or not?

After my exposé about **Jeremy Marquez** in my previous column came out, many female readers e-mailed me. They were shocked to find out that Jeremy Marquez is a married man and that his wife has filed charges against him for abandonment/non-support of their children.

To quote one of them: "I like **Piolo Pascual, Jericho Rosales** and **Diether Ocampo**. Even if they have kids already, my illusions about them are intact 'cause they are proud of their children and support them. I have heard Piolo mention his son's name **Iñigo** on 'ASAP Mania;' Jericho said 'Hello! **Santino**' to his son on TV; and Diether, receiving an award one, said, 'This is for you, **Dream**.' And when my friends and I are at Rockwell, sometimes we bump into these actors, with their kids. My point is, it makes them more of a man and more yummy for us fans who idolize them. It is always nice to hear actors when they are honest. Jeremy should be proud of his kids. Maybe if he starts doing that, my friends and I will like him again."

Perhaps Jeremy needs new blocks for image building, or will he always be just a chip off the old Marquez block?

Locked up

POOR Senator **Ralph Recto**! He got locked inside the comfort room of his office due to a defective doorknob. My naughty gay friend exclaimed, "Too bad I didn't get stranded with him!" The dashing senator got out in one piece, safe ... and alone.

PR 'Oscars'

THE Public Relations Society of the Philippines (PRSP) has set the 40th Anvil Awards Night tomorrow at the Grand Ballroom of Hotel Intercontinental in Makati City. The Anvil competition is considered the "Oscars" of the PR industry.

The newly elected Board of Directors for 2005-2006 will also be inducted during the Awards Night. These include: **Milen Sison de Quiros**, APR–Full Circle Communications, president; **Maloli Espinosa**–ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp., vice president for internal; **Butch S. Raquel**–GMA network Inc., vice president for external; **Rochelle G. Hilario**—Asian Terminals Inc. secretary; **Angelito G. Doble**–Philippine National Bank, treasurer; **Rocky G. Dimaculangan**—Ayala Land, Inc., internal auditor; **Ritzi Villarico Ronquillo**—Manila Electric Co., director; **Joel D. Lacsamana**—Manila Water Co., director; and **Dante M. Velasco**, APR—Creative Point Int'l. Inc. director.

(For feedback, email wateringholeshangrila@yahoo.com or dollyanne@truefaithband.com)

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GMA Pinoy TV goes to Japan

GMA Pinoy TV goes to the Land of the Rising Sun.

GMA, now the country's No. 1 television network, has teamed up with Access TV, owned by IPS Inc., a leading telecommunications company in Japan, to bring Filipinos residing there fresh entertainment, current news and information through GMA Pinoy TV channel.

"Because of this partnership, our countrymen in Japan will now have easy access to Filipino entertainment," said GMA president and chief executive officer Felipe Gozon.

Serious viewers

In the United States, The Filipino Channel, or TFC, broadcasts news and variety programs and other select shows from ABS-CBN, GMA 7's rival network.

Many Filipinos in the West Coast, for instance, seriously build schedules around TFC programming. Many of them, in fact, are better versed in the latest developments in local show business than the average Pinoy outside Metro Manila.

This may soon happen among Filipinos in Japan.

According to Gozon, Pinoy TV will air only the station's world-class programs, many of which have received recognition from international television award-giving bodies, as well as the most popular among local televiewers.

Among the titles most likely to make it to the programming grid are: "24 Oras," "I-Witness," the *telenovela* "Kung Mawawala Ka," and of course, the phenomenal *fantaserye*, "Mulawin.

Non-stop information

The news and public affairs programs are intended to provide viewers with continuous information on the Philippines.

The "historic" contract was signed at the GMA station's executive boardroom by: Gozon; GMA executive vice president and chief operating officer Jimmy Duavit Jr.; IPS Inc. chairman and CEO Koji Miyashita: and Access TV managing director Tomoyuki Maeda.

With the superb tandem of GMA and IPS Inc., the signatories agreed, "Pinoy TV viewing in Japan will never be the same again."

YES, IT CAN
Star Cinema casts Hero Angeles and Sandara Park in their first starrer as a love team, "Can This Be Love," written and directed by Jose Javier Reyes.

Hero and Sandara are the original winners of ABS-CBN's "Star Circle Quest."

"It is a story for lovers of all ages," said Reyes of the movie, slated for showing in April. "It shows how two people in love survive cultural differences."

VELASQUEZ

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Singing for deaf children

BAUTISTA

REGINE Velasquez, Aiza Seguerra, Mark Bautista and Florante are some of the featured performers in "Superkids ... Superfriends ... Superheroes," a benefit concert for the Philippine Institute for the Deaf. PID is the first school in the country to teach deaf children to speak and hear. It has been working for 17 years.

The fundraiser is set March 15 at the Carlos P. Romulo Auditorium, RCBC Building, Buendia corner Ayala Avenue, Makati City.

More credible jurors, please

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

WE CAUGHT the "Stardance" competition on Channel 2 again last Sunday, and were once more disappointed in the show's choice of judges. **Michael Flores** was a credible juror, since he used to be a professional dancer. But **Bing Loyzaga** and **John Lapuz**? Please.

It's important for contests to choose judges who are experts in the field that's up for judging. Otherwise, jurors' verdicts could become too subjective and even whimsical to be taken seriously. And, if the judging is wishy-washy, there goes the competition!

This is a pity, because some of the "Stardance" finalists are exceptional performers. But if the judging is whimsical, will the best contenders emerge as winners?

Other talent tilts on TV are also found wanting in some of the people they tap as judges.

Seen more generally, the problem seems to lie in the attempt to achieve an awkward combination of expertise and entertainment value.

In other words, some talent competitions may be afraid that experts won't be "entertaining" in their comments, so they tap celebrity non-experts to judge, because they're sure that these celebrity judges will come up with colorfully scathing verdicts.

Let's not lose sight of the prime objective, shall we? It's key to come up with credible verdicts, so TV talent searches will just have to look for experts who can also be "colorful" in their comments.

Joys and pains of self-delusion

"Sideways" is a relatively small film as far as Hollywood productions go, but it's making inordinately big news on the movie scene, with the awards it won in the recent 2004 Oscar awards. What makes the film such a sleeper hit?

The way we see it, "Sideways" appeals primarily to relatively mature viewers, who can readily identify with the two middle-aged

MORE/ A2-2

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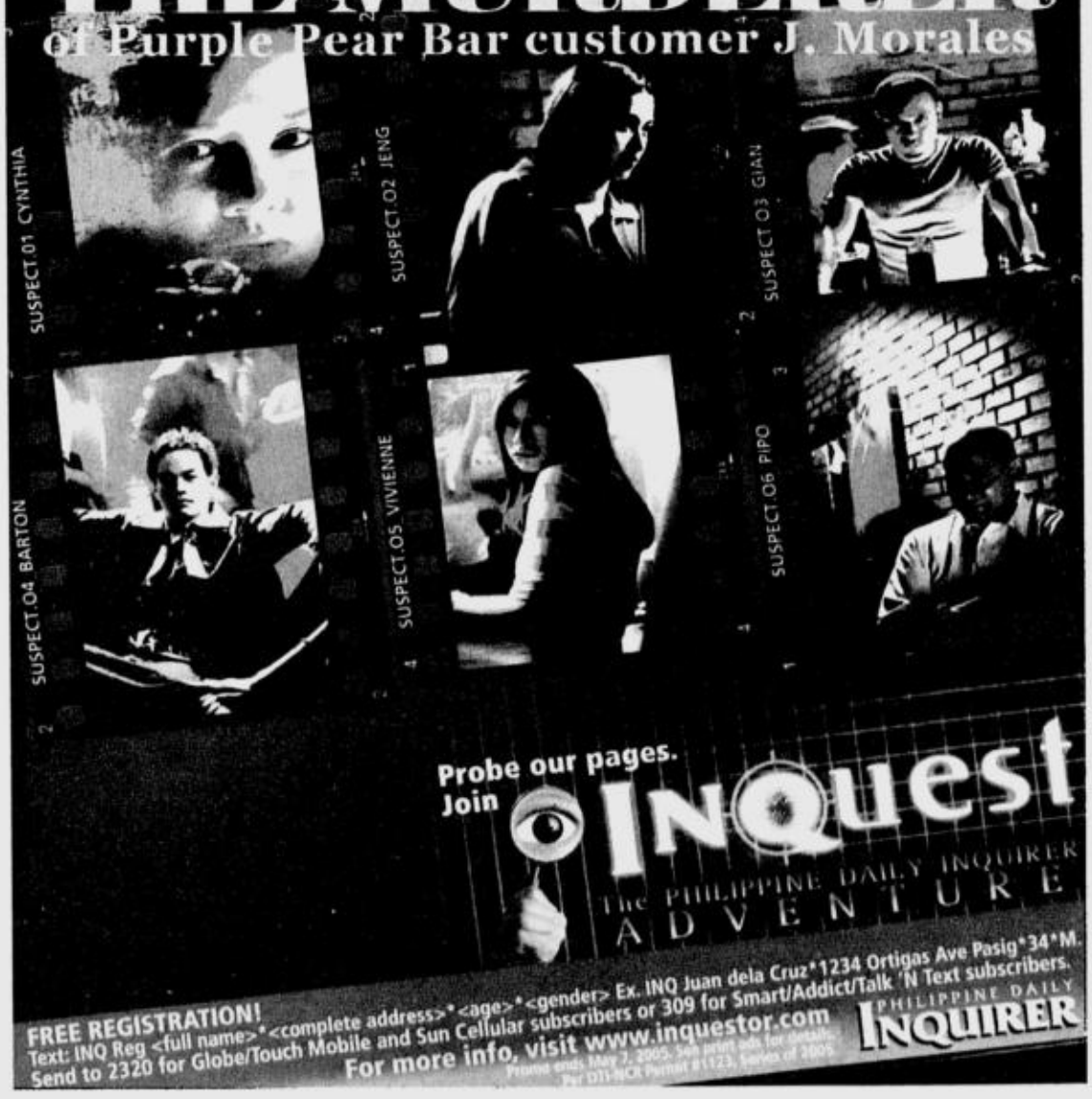

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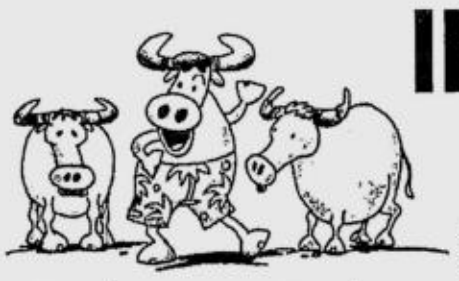

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2 HITCH	2 HOSTAGE	2 THE FINAL CUT	6 HOSTAGE	THX 2 HOSTAGE 1:40, 4:05, 6:30, 8:55, 11:20	2 AVIATOR
3 MILLION DOLLAR BABY		THX 3 HITCH 12:35, 3:00, 6:35, 8:00, 10:20	7 MILLION DOLLAR BABY	3 LEMONY SNICKET'S 1:30, 3:45, 6:00, 8:15, 10:30	3 SIDEWAYS
4 CURSED	3 SPANGLISH	4 CONSTANTINE		4 MILLION DOLLAR BABY 1:10, 3:45, 6:20, 8:55, 11:20	4 INFECTION
5 LEMONY SNICKET'S	4 BIRHEN SA MANAOG	GB1 (Greenbelt 1): 1 HITCH 11:50, 2:15, 4:40, 7:05, 9:30; 2 HOSTAGE 12:00, 2:25, 4:50, 7:15, 9:40		5 HITCH 1:25, 3:45, 6:05, 8:25, 10:45	5

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Did Jon by mak

DIRECTOR Jon Red is awar ing a movie for Viva Films well with colleagues in th dent film circuit. "I know th ple who will think [it's a] says. "I do not think so. I s tionship as the mainstream the independents and the r very good for both."

Red is talking about Viva F the outfit's first-ever feature shot entirely on mini-digital

A dark comedy, the movie Quizon and Katya Santos. Re the screenplay based on a sto

"Boso" means "peep." In Quizon plays Jake, a Peep janitor and caretaker of house who spends whole n on tenants through holes in

This pastime becomes me able when Cecilia and Allen, a ried couple, move into one o Jake is instantly smitten with this leads to an unfortunate in

Awards

Red studied painting an at the Philippine High Sch Arts and the University of pines. He attended a film the Mowelfund Film Instit his works are the short which won the Best Jury Mondiale dela Video in B gium; "Tiempo," which w Short Film Gawad Urian;

More credi

From page A2-1

guys whose stories it tells tive in an offbeat sort of w that the two lifelong frienc matched:

Paul Giamatti plays a novelist who's been divorced As for his buddy, he's a very tor and modern-day satyr w thing in skirts—or decorator

The two unlikely friend through California's wine is Paul's bubbly send-off who's about to get marrie

Paul's character takes the trip to show off his exp comes to wines. His frien impressed, but the viewer Paul's expertise is not all sive, because it eventually handy and fastidious detou

Instead of confronting he fusses over vintage niceties. It could also be a er-up for his alcoholism.

The sometime actor is s sional. He's no longer you still thinks he's God's gift stead of getting a job, he successes.

And he's a really thoug sensitive cad: on his wa ried, he beds a woman w with him.

When she finds out th hitched in a couple of days up so badly that his hand drastically altered. Serves

Giamatti's character a mantic interlude, with a studying for an MA in h all things. Well, she ends him off in her fashion, ends on a possibly hopef

That happens when, a

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ALLEN DIZON, Katya Santos and Jeffrey Quizon in "Boso"

Red 'sell out' ing Viva film?

e that mak- may not sit e indepen- ere are peo- sellout," he e this rela- buying into sults can be

lms' "Boso," presentation ideo. stars Jeffrey d also wrote ry by May L. the movie, ing Tom, a a rooming ghts spying he ceiling. ore pleasur- young mar- f the rooms. Cecilia, and cident.

visual arts ool for the the Philip- orkshop at ite. Among films "Es," Prize at the ussels, Bel- on the Best and "Trip," which also won at the Urian and named Best Short Film by the Cultural Center of the Philippines.

He ventured into full-length features with "Utang ni Tatang," awarded Best Cinematography and Best Production Design trophies at the Manila Film Festival in 2002. This was followed by "ASTIGmatism," winner of the Silver Digital Video Award at the Hong Kong International Film Festival.

Inroads

Rising production costs and dwindling box-office receipts have prompted Viva Films to consider using digital technology in making feature films.

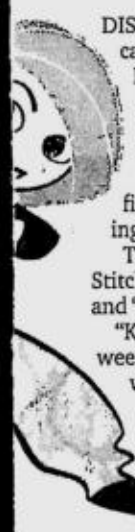
"Viva hopes to create inroads and use its marketing savvy to introduce new trends," says producer Vincent del Rosario. "We also see the establishment of Viva Digital as an effective means to discover new talents."

Quizon, talented son of Dolphy, has a penchant for playing edgy characters. He inhabits the role of Jake like a second skin and delivers a remarkable performance.

Santos, a Viva Hotbabe, plays Cecilia. She made her breakthrough indie appearance in an important role also opposite Jeffrey Quizon in "Radyo," directed by Yam Laranas. Then she played the title role in Quark Henares' "Keka," another independent film.

Bembol Roco, Joel Torre, Ronnie Lazaro and Tado play cameo parts in "Boso."

ssible' up for Emmy



DISNEY Channel was nominated in nine categories for this year's 32nd Annual Daytime Emmy Awards—more than any cable network. Its sister studio, Walt Disney Television Animation, got seven nominations.

The Disney "Kim Possible" received five nominations, including Outstanding Children's Animated Program.

Three other WDTA nominees are "Lilo & Stitch: The Series," "Brandy & Whiskers" and "Rolie Polie Olie."

"Kim" airs on Disney Channel 6 p.m. weekdays, and 11:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. weekends (Singapore/Hong Kong time).

The National Television Academy gives out the Daytime Emmys on May 20.

ple jurors, please

Also attrac- y is the fact are so mis-

orose failed r two years. casional ac- chases any- ans.

go on a trip untry. This his chum,

dvantage of rise when it is properly on sees that hat impres- mes off as a for him.

s problems, and other legant cov-

ilarly delu- , and yet he women. In- ves his past

less and in- o get mar- falls in love

he's getting e beats him ne profile is right!

has a ro- tress who's iculture, of also telling their story ote.

decades of deluding himself about his prospects as a writer, he finally accepts the fact that he's a failed novelist. This is a major epiphany that enables him to confront the other comfortable conundrums in his life, and finally grow up in the truly mature, responsible and self-actualizing sense of the term.

Thus, "Sideways" comes off as an exceptional production because it offers empathetic challenge, comeuppance and redemption for the many other people out there who still believe that they are experiencing the joys of self-delusion, while being in denial about its pains.

Movies on TV

On HBO today at 11:10 a.m., "My House in Umbria"; 9 p.m., "LOTR: The Return of the King." Tomorrow at 9 p.m., "The Devil's Own."

On Cinemax, today at 6 a.m., "Flashdance"; 11:05 p.m., "The Postman." Tomorow at 6:30 a.m., "A Death in the Family"; 11 a.m., "Funny Girl."

'Robot'

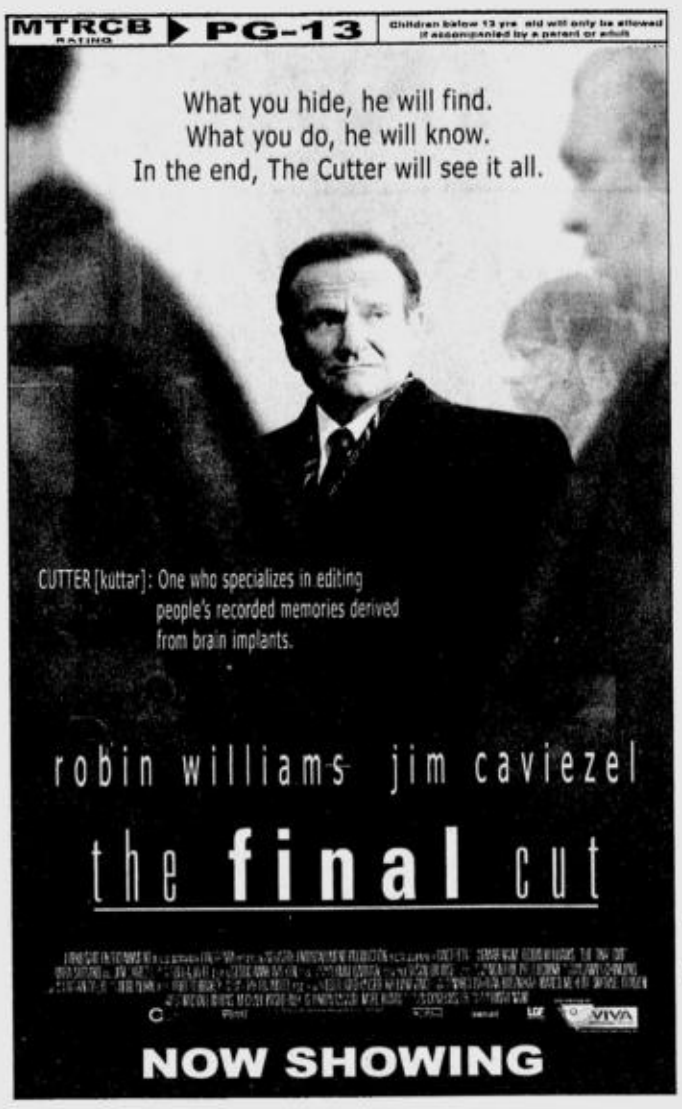
The new animated feature, "Robots," is about the amusing and touching journey of Rodney, a brilliant young inventor who dreams of making the world a better place. In casting Rodney's voice, the movie's creative staffers were looking for an actor who could be appealing and funny, and maybe provide a little something extra. They found their perfect talent in Ewan McGregor.

Ewan brings an edge to Rodney that adds another dimension to the film's lead character. For his part, McGregor instantly warmed up to voicing Rodney. He describes the young genius as someone who possesses "a lovely kind of country naiveté and passion that were a lot of fun to play."

"Robots" starts its local run on March 16.

MTRCB RATING PG-13 Children below 13 yrs old will only be allowed if accompanied by a parent or adult

What you hide, he will find.
What you do, he will know.
In the end, The Cutter will see it all.



CUTTER [kuttar]: One who specializes in editing people's recorded memories derived from brain implants.

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HITCH PG13 12:15,2:45,5:15,7:45,10:20	LEMONY SNICKET'S A SERIES OF UNFORTUNATE EVENTS GP 12:30,2:50,5:10,7:30,9:50	HOSTAGE R13 12:40,3:00,5:20,7:40,10:10

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UA&P mounts 'Clytemnestra'

KULTURA, the arts program of the University of Asia and the Pacific (UA&P), is mounting "Clytemnestra," written by Palanca winner Christian R. Vallez and directed by Tinette Villanueva.

Fredelina Francesca D. Pascua, plays the title role. The play opened last night and is ongoing until March 12 at the Celestino Dizon Auditorium. Showtime is 8 p.m. Call 6370912 loc. 3809 or 09224959340.

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THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

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Hot, hot!

DANCE champs Michael Malitowski and Joanna Leunis star in a special dinner show, "Too Hot to Handle," at the Savannah Moon in Libis, Quezon City, at 7 tonight. They will dance the rumba, paso doble, salsa, mambo, and cha-cha. Call 845-4909 for inquiries.

K in Davao

K AND the Boxers will perform in Davao City tomorrow night. The "Most Promising Group of 2004," according to the Guillermo Mendoza Foundation, plays regular sets at Soundstage on Tuesdays, Klownz Bar in Araneta on Wednesdays, Ratsky Tomas Morato on Thursdays, and Ratsky Malate on Fridays.

Ai Ai at Klownz

Ai Ai de las Alas stars in "Wanna Dance" on March 12 at the Klownz in Angeles City.

By request

OGIE Alcasid is featured in "Best by Request," March 12 at the Aliw Theater. Mindcom is line producing the show, both for stage and television. Guest stars are Kyla, Victoria, Raymond Bagatsing with the Bandidoz and Rufa Mae Quinto. The concert will also be staged at The Venue in Davao next month. Tickets at P75 and P100 are available at all M Lhuiller Outlets in Metro Manila.

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Plan sets yearly export growth goal at 10%

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE DEPARTMENT of Trade and Industry and the Export Development Council are finalizing a three-year comprehensive plan to achieve $47.5 billion in export receipts this year, up from about $40 billion last year, and a growth rate of 10 percent yearly in 2006 and 2007.

EDC is a joint government-private sector think tank composed of representatives from various government agencies and industry associations.

Trade Secretary Juan B. Santos yesterday said the projections under the Philippine Export Development Plan for 2005-2007 were buoyed by the expected increase in investments in various sectors and the sustained improvements in the business environment.

Santos said the DTI and EDC were stepping up efforts to have the PEDP wrapped up as soon as possible as directed by President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Under the Export Development Act of 1994, the PEDP which is updated periodically, sets the blueprint for the export industry for three-year periods.

Santos said the President had set a milestone challenge of achieving at least $52 billion in export revenue in 2006 and $58 billion in 2007.

"These targets are optimistic considering that international and multilateral agencies foresee modest global economic growth starting this year," he said.

"The targets can be realized through better market distribution, expansion of export base beyond traditional products, promotion of dollar-earning services and inflow of export-oriented investments," the official added.

Santos said the President made it clear that the new PEDP would emphasize the contribution of services exports, considering the "major headway accomplished" in high-value information and communications technology services and design services.

To face the challenge of increasing pressures in international competitiveness amid economic liberalization, Santos said the PEDP would call for a strategic alignment of products exported to high-impact markets like the United States, Japan, European Union and China.

"We would also work towards vertical complementation of industries along the supply chain with out Southeast Asian neighbors through the priority integration sectors," he said.

The DTI chief explained that, for example, the country may specialize on garments design and branding while Indonesia would concentrate on fabric manufacture, Singapore on logistics, an Malaysia on garments manufacturing.

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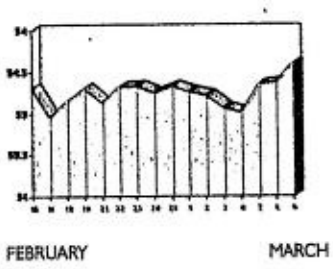

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As of 5 p.m., March 9, 2005

¥104.62 = $1
As of 5 p.m., March 9, 2005

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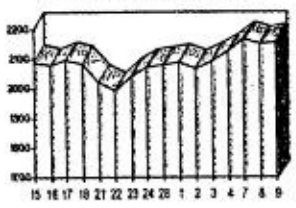
STOCK MARKET

Stocks close 0.38% higher

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX



SHARE prices yesterday closed 0.38 percent higher as investors accumulated select blue chips following a session of profit-taking, dealers said.

They said investors expected share prices to come under new pressure as many stocks were now considered to be at overbought levels.

The Philippine Stock Exchange composite index added 8.08 points to 2,157.14. It traded between 2,149.06 and 2,160.75. Turnover reached 4.2 billion shares worth P1.29 billion. The broader all-shares index rose 12.77 points to 1,239.84.

Gainers beat losers 69 to 31, with 47 stocks unchanged.

"The market remains overbought and may continue to have some corrections in the coming sessions. Investors may also be cashing-out to pay for the initial public offerings (IPOs)," Jose Vistan of AB Capital Securities, said.

Manila Water Co. and SM Investments Corp. are engaged in much anticipated initial public offerings, taking advantage of the local bourse's recent run-up to a five-year high.

"The market is going through some consolidation. Expect some shift in funds to pay for recently purchased IPO shares," Mark Alan Canizares of Citiseconline.com, said. *AFP*

Gov't expected to further open up 5 key industries

By Doris C. Dumlao

MACTAN, Cebu—The government yesterday vowed to further liberalize five key service sectors—airlines, telecommunications, power, ports and shipping—to lower the cost of doing business in the country.

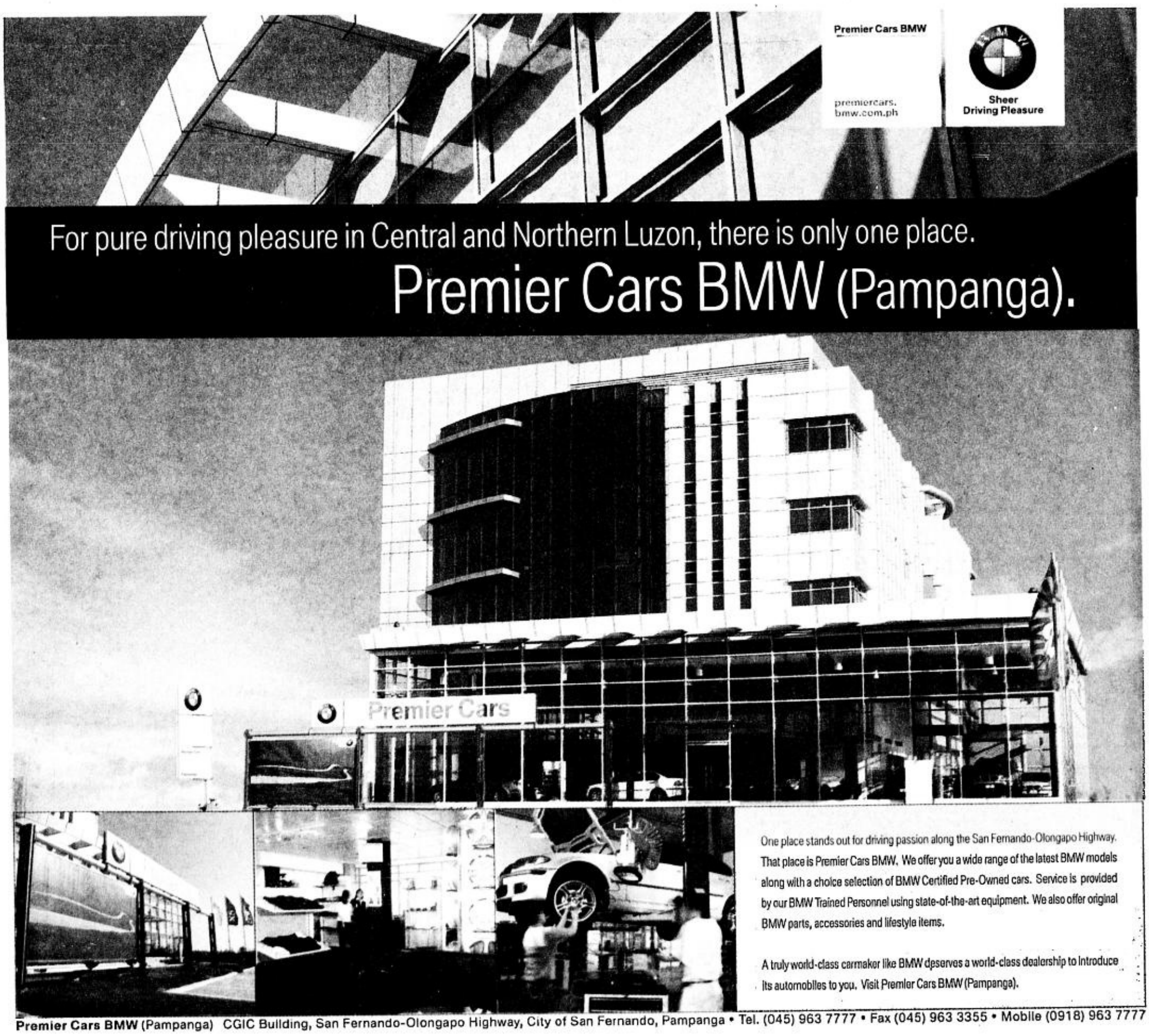
During the Euromoney Philippine Investment Conference held here yesterday, Economic Planning Secretary Romulo Neri said that while the country had deregulated the manufacturing sector, the services sector had been left behind.

Given this, he said the second wave of deregulation would cover these crucial service areas. Such a move, he said, would improve the country's infrastructure base.

The cost of telecommunication in the Philippines, he said, was among the highest in the region. This,

GOV'T/B5

'SEAT' OF AUTHORITY
Trade Secretary Juan B. Santos and Sen. Franklin Drilon graced the opening of the Philippine International Furniture Show 2005 at the World Trade Center on Feb. 28-March 3. The event showcased the best Philippine-crafted products geared for export.



Award whining

BREAKTIME

Conrado R. Banal III

RIGHT away, our leaders in business and in government must stop prattling about silly things, like perking up the economy to create jobs for the more than 11 million jobless.

Instead, they should pay attention to high-profile problems, such as the use of imported ice cream in halo-halo this summer, and the irritating award-winning squabble over the Anvil.

That is actually... well, an "award." The Anvil, for the sake of those two "action" men in the Senate, is the Oscar of the public relations business—without the sex.

Every year, the Public Relations Society of the Philippines, or the PRSP, gives out awards to deserving PR insects eating into the truth fiber of our society.

No, not that. I mean, the deserving PR programs in business and in government that changed the course of history, basically by covering up for clients!

Tomorrow, the PRSP is giving out Anvils. AGAIN! For the second time this year! And these are supposed to be the top PR guys in the country today!

Another group that claims to be the PRSP, actually, already gave out last month the same awards called Anvil.

This country's top PRs, in other words, have a little whining PR problem. What a country!

* * *

IF we have two separate Anvil awards, it will tarnish the public image of those high caliber PRs. The conflicting awards only confuse the public.

Any good PR work, as any good PR practitioner will tell you, is about gaining the trust of your audience, which is basically all of us - the public.

And so to build a relationship of trust with the public, PRs must also be good communicators. That's why PR work is basically mass media work.

But as they say in the business, public trust is a fragile thing. You must keep on working on it. A PR's job is never done.

So what kind of trust do they build with the public, when the PRs give out two sets of Anvil awards?

I mean, come on guys, this is the biggest and most prestigious PR organization in the country, and it is acting like the government.

* * *

FROM what I gathered from almost all the past presidents of PRSP, the confusion over the Anvil awards stemmed from the problems over the elections of new PRSP officers.

Somebody named Winston Marbella, who became PRSP president in 2003, did not want to hold the elections after his first term.

Whether Marbella has blood relations with the late former dictator Ferdinand Marcos, or Marbella just idolizes the guy, nobody in PRSP could say for certain.

But his holding on to power, whatever little power is vested a little position like his, in a little organization like PRSP, inspired a mini-version of people power.

As a matter of fact, the majority of the board resigned, possibly aiming to send him a message to stop his foolishness.

But Marbella persisted, filing a court suit to stop the elections last year, and then he persisted again this year by holding his own elections.

Nobody can also say whether the group of Marbella got its inspiration from this cute administration of Gloriaetta's election maneuver in Cebu.

* * *

ANYWAY, a former president of PRSP who now works as PR consultant in Bangko Sentral noted that how Marbella got the PRSP members to hold his own elections, was still anybody's guess.

Thus, in his supposed PRSP board, Marbella has some guys who have never been legitimate PR practitioners, much less PRSP members.

According to the majority of the PRSP members, the organization already held its elections, and it did not vote for Marbella.

Actually, the new PRSP president is Amylyn de Quiros, a daughter of former Press Secretary Jess Sison, who has her own PR outfit.

The vice presidents are Butch Raquel of GMA-7 and Maloli Manalastas of ABS-CBN. Oops, is this an extension of the network war?

Anyway, others in the new board are Joel Lacsamana of Manila Water, Angel Doble of PNB, Rocky Dimaculangan of Ayala Land, Rochelle Hilario of Asian Terminal, Ritzi Ronquillo of Meralco and Dante Velasco.

I listed their affiliation to show that, really, it is a powerhouse board.

I also want to list down the affiliation of the supposed "board" of Marbella. But I don't have the heart.

* * *

RECENTLY, a fuel tanker company called Herma got a lynching in media for its alleged stealing of fuel it delivered for Petron. Allegedly!

Media had a field day skinning Herma alive, particularly some "crime" columnists in some tabloids.

You see, Petron filed a case against Herma, alleging that the company stole from Petron some P35 million worth of fuel over five years.

All of sudden, without any notice of court order or what have you, armed men boarded one of the tankers of Herma.

Together with the "raiding" team, made up of personnel from the police force CIDG (or Criminal Investigation and Detection Group) and Petron, were media people.

That "raid" was done early in the morning, at around 2 am. It turned out that Herma got a copy of the complaint of Petron much later, at 10 am.

Obviously the, er, "raiding" party intended to surprise the Herma tanker. The company had no time to cover its evil ways. If any!

* * *

BASED on the Petron complaint, five of its contracted fuel haulers were stealing from the oil company by retaining part of the delivery in their vessels.

Petron claimed that its haulers did not unload the entire shipment. That's why its measurement of fuel level at its depot was short by some P35 million worth of fuel in the past five years.

Thus, through the surprise raid, the police (with media) probably wanted to catch the thief in the act. The Herma vessel just delivered fuel to the Petron depot. And guess who got the surprise instead!

Petron claimed that, in the particular shipment of the Herma vessel in the police cum media "raid," based on the reading of the delivered fuel at the Petron depot, the hauler Herma stole some 12,000 liters of fuel.

An official inspection of the Herma vessel, which was witnessed by the police and Petron officers, showed that only 1,600 liters were left in the tanker, which were the usual residue of fuel that could not be pumped out by the machines at the Petron depot.

In fact, the raiding "team" of police and media had to use portable pumps and—try to beat this—pails. Manual operation, in short!

Where did the 12,000 liters go? Or for that matter, where did all that P35 million worth of fuel go? This is not just bad PR. I guess Petron has some internal checking to do.

BSP invites investors to capital mart

By Michelle V. Remo

THE BANGKO Sentral ng Pilipinas has invited foreign investors to put their money in the Philippines' fledgling capital market, saying the government had taken the crucial steps necessary to make the local market more attractive.

Speaking during the Philippine Investment Conference yesterday, BSP Deputy Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. said the central bank took a primary role in promoting good corporate governance and transparency to guide investors in their decision-making.

The Philippine Investment Conference, a two-day event that concludes today, is a gathering of local and foreign investors and government economic managers.

"We are demanding higher standards of conduct from external auditors so that reliable statements can be properly enforced. We are also gearing toward aligning national financial accounting standards with the International Accounting Standards (IAS)," Tetangco said in his speech.

The invitation to foreign investors to place their money in the Philippine capital market comes in time with the planned setting up of a fixed-income exchange (FIE), which will be an open market to various debt instruments.

SM investment unit trims IPO price range

By Doris C. Dumlao *in Cebu* and Elizabeth L. Sanchez *in Manila*

MACTAN, Cebu—SM Investments Corp., the investment arm of retail magnate Henry Sy Sr., has narrowed the price range of its planned initial public offering to P230-P270 a share, from P230 to P300.

Sources privy to the offer were also optimistic that because of the healthy appetite for SMIC shares, the IPO might bring in as much as $500 million, from the initial target of $300 million.

"My father told us to narrow the range because of the good reception abroad," said Tessie Sy-Coson, SMIC co-vice chair, on the sidelines of a Philippines Investment Conference in Cebu.

She explained that a tighter range for SMIC's offer price was not due to the lack of demand, but an accommodation to foreign interest.

SMIC's book-building activity, which will determine the price of the shares, will end today.

Around 70 percent of the total offered shares, or between 52.5 million and 98 million shares, were distributed during the book-building period.

For local investors, the offer period will start on March 11 and end on March 17.

The listing for SMIC shares was set for March 22.

The SMIC IPO is touted to be the biggest public offering since Petron Corp., which raised nearly P18 billion in proceeds from its IPO in 1996.

SMIC officials went on an international roadshow in key cities such as Hong Kong and Singapore to drum up interest in the IPO.

SMIC tapped Macquarie Securities (Asia) Pte. Ltd. as the global coordinator for the international offer, and BDO Capital & Investment Corp. for the domestic offering.

SMIC has interests in commercial centers through mall developer SM Prime Holdings Inc., retail, wholesale and merchandising through department store operations, financial services and banking through Banco de Oro Universal Bank, and real estate development and tourism.

Three of its subsidiaries are already listed: SM Prime Holdings, where it controls 52.6 percent of the shares; SM Development Corp. (58 percent-owned) and Banco De Oro (41.2 percent).

Among its interests in tourism are those under SMDC and Highlands Prime, which owns the prime real estate in Tagaytay Highlnds, an upscale leisure and residential development project.

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URBAN INSTITUTE OF REAL ESTATE

DISCLOSURES

GLOBE Telecom accepted a total of 8.06 million common shares equivalent to P7.66 billion that were sold by shareholders. It also offered to purchase one share for every 15 shares of the outstanding common stock of the corporation from all shareholders of record date Feb 10 at P950 per share.

* * *

A BROWN Co. Inc. bought 150,000 BRN shares last March 7 at P0.96 each.

* * *

EEI Corp. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on June 17, 10 a.m. at the RCBC Plaza, Ayala Avenue, cor. Sen. Gil Puyat Avenue, Makati City. Stockholders as of March 31 are entitled to vote.

* * *

DIGITAL Telecommunications Philippines Inc. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on May 30, 10 a.m. at Amorsolo Ballroom of Holiday Inn Galleria Manila. Stockholders as of March 31 are entitled to vote.

* * *

TANDUAY Holdings Inc.'s board of directors scheduled the stockholders' meeting on May 4. All stockholders as of April 4 are entitled to vote.

* * *

ROBINSON Land Corp.'s board of directors approved a resolution to include the following in the amended by-laws of the corporation: election of directors and required number of independent directors, filling up vacancies in the board, provisions on proxies and on fixing the date for stockholders meeting and delegate power to the board to repeal and amend by-laws or adopt new bylaws of the corporation. These amendments are to be presented during stockholders' meeting for approval.

Compiled by Chona Galang, PDI Research

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OFFICE FURNITURE
• OFFICE TABLES & CHAIRS • CABINETS & DRAWERS • VENETIAN BLINDS • BOOKSHELVES

HOME APPLIANCES
• AIRCONS • WASHING MACHINES • REFRIGERATORS • TELEVISION SETS • VACUUM CLEANERS • GAS RANGES • FLOOR POLISHERS

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PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of March 9, 2005)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
BANKS					
Asiatrust Dev. Bank Inc.	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.5	60,000
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	30	30.5	30	30.5	801,200
Bank of the Phil. Islands	59.5	59.5	57.5	58	1,187,900
China Banking Corp.	685	690	685	690	1,940
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	49	51	49	51	70,900
Export and Ind. Bank Inc.	0.91	0.93	0.91	0.92	7,960,000
International Exch. Bank	19	19	19	19	131,100
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	36	36	35.5	36	970,400
Philippine National Bank	32	32.5	32	32	129,800
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	14.5	14.5	14.5	14.5	23,500
Security Bank Corp.	31	31	31	31	30,000
Union Bank of the Phil.	31.5	31.5	31.5	31.5	14,100
FINANCIAL SERVICES					
First Abacus Financial	0.55	0.56	0.55	0.56	400,000
Manulife Financial Corp.	2520	2555	2520	2555	560
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	2.16	2.18	2.14	2.14	937,000
Phil. Stock Exchange Inc.	145	150	145	150	2,710
Sun Life Financial Inc.	1775	1780	1775	1780	950
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	17.75	17.75	17.75	17.75	24,800
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	1.54	1.54	1.5	1.5	7,606,000
Easycall Phils. Inc.-Com	5.1	5.1	5	5	12,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	940	940	935	935	25,700
Ipeople, Inc.	4.8	4.8	4.8	4.8	50,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.065	0.07	0.0625	0.065	45,500,000
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	3.8	3.8	3.75	3.75	5,193,000
Phil. Long D/s Tel Co.	1470	1485	1470	1480	150,870
Ivantage Corp.	0.79	0.84	0.79	0.82	17,480,000
Philweb Corp.	0.022	0.026	0.022	0.025	851,700,000
POWER & ENERGY					
Manila Electric Co. A	21.5	21.5	20.75	20.75	239,000
Manila Electric Co. B	31	31	30	30.5	3,661,800
Petron Corp.	4.35	4.5	4.35	4.5	10,655,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	1.46	1.5	1.46	1.5	339,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	8.5	8.7	8.5	8.7	566,000
Keppel Phils. Marine Inc.	0.64	0.64	0.64	0.64	310,000
Lorenzo Shipping Corp.	1.14	1.22	1.14	1.14	1,410,000
CONSTRUCTION & OTHER RELATED PRODUCTS					
Engineering Equip. Inc.	0.7	0.77	0.7	0.75	8,020,000
Holcim Philippines Inc.	4.45	4.6	4.45	4.45	3,204,000
Phil Nat'l Const. Corp.	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	15,000
Republic Cement Corp.	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4	44,000
Republic Glass Hldg. Corp.	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.7	9,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	3.9	3.9	3.8	3.8	67,000
Jollibee Foods Corp.	29.5	29.5	29	29.5	122,200
RFM Corp.	1	1	0.99	0.99	766,000
Swift Food Inc.	0.41	0.41	0.41	0.41	80,000
San Miguel Corp. A	56.5	57	56.5	57	344,000
San Miguel Corp. B	84	84.5	84	84.5	238,600
Universal Robina Corp.	11	11	11	11	22,900
Vitarich Corp.	0.29	0.29	0.29	0.29	580,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.011	0.011	0.011	0.011	132,500,000
Abacus Con Res & Hdg B	0.012	0.013	0.012	0.013	18,000,000
Ayala Corp.	8.4	8.4	8.3	8.4	7,282,000
Alsons Cons. Res. Inc.	0.7	0.73	0.69	0.73	1,460,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	4.95	5.3	4.95	5	895,000
Alliance Global Group Inc.	10.75	10.75	10.75	10.75	3,000
Ajo Net Holdings Inc.	0.065	0.065	0.0575	0.0575	55,100,000
A. Soriano Corp.	2.38	2.46	2.32	2.46	7,032,000
APC Group Inc.	0.45	0.48	0.45	0.48	1,950,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.0085	0.009	0.0085	0.009	361,000,000
Aries Prime Res. Inc.	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	10,000
Balabac Resources & Hldgs	0.81	0.81	0.81	0.81	90,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc.	26	26	25	25	134,600
Boulevard Holdings Inc.	0.21	0.22	0.21	0.215	7,350,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	1.4	1.4	1.38	1.38	6,558,000
Basic Consolidated Inc.	0.235	0.235	0.235	0.235	500,000
Cadp Group Corp.	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3	20,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.26	0.3	0.26	0.27	3,590,000
Southeast Asian Cement	0.57	0.57	0.55	0.55	1,260,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	4.4	4.65	4.4	4.6	6,107,000
Ever-Gotesco Resources	0.06	0.0625	0.06	0.0625	12,000,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	1.6	1.72	1.6	1.68	3,004,000
Fil-Hispano Holdings Corp.	10.5	10.75	10.5	10.75	160,000
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	61.5	61.5	60.5	60.5	275,900
Forum Pacific Inc.	0.28	0.28	0.27	0.27	410,000
Global Equities Inc.	0.135	0.15	0.135	0.145	136,010,000
House of Investments Inc.	1.78	1.9	1.76	1.9	1,108,000
Ionics Inc.	1.66	1.7	1.66	1.7	38,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	3.75	3.9	3.75	3.9	1,697,000
Macroasia Corp.	2	2.04	2	2.04	274,000
Medco Holdings	0.45	0.45	0.45	0.45	10,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.76	1.8	1.76	1.78	11,115,000
Multitech Inv. Corp.	0.5	0.53	0.5	0.52	1,220,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.61	0.62	0.59	0.59	19,350,000
Polar Property Holdings	2.4	2.4	2.4	2.4	10,000
Prime Orion Phils. Inc.	0.35	0.36	0.35	0.36	620,000
East Asia Power Res. Corp.	0.32	0.37	0.31	0.36	2,800,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	1	1	1	1	9,000
Solid Group Inc.	0.65	0.65	0.65	0.65	540,000
South China Resources Inc.	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	30,000
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.19	0.24	0.19	0.225	44,680,000
Wellex Industries Inc.	0.22	0.225	0.2	0.215	8,920,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.35	0.35	0.33	0.35	1,840,000
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Active Alliance Inc.	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4	50,000
Music Semiconductors Corp.	1.68	1.68	1.68	1.68	12,000
Mabuhay Vinyl Corp.	0.89	0.95	0.89	0.95	530,000
Picop Resources Inc.	0.165	0.175	0.165	0.17	26,690,000
Steniel Manufacturing	0.22	0.26	0.22	0.26	450,000
HOTEL, RECREATION & OTHER SERVICES					
Belle Corp.	1.6	1.7	1.6	1.66	18,696,000
Fairmont Holdings Inc.	1.24	1.24	1.2	1.22	631,000
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	1.56	1.62	1.56	1.56	7,625,000
Premiere Ent. Prod. Inc.	0.39	0.39	0.39	0.39	2,610,000
Philippine Racing Club	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.1	123,000
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp.(Pdr)	17.5	17.5	17.25	17.25	846,800
PLDT (10% Pref) Series Q	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	100
PLDT (10% Pref) Series S	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	700
PLDT (10% Pref) Series W	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	100
PLDT 10% Pref Series Cc	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	600
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	9.6	9.7	9.6	9.6	4,890,000
Cityland Development Corp.	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6	114,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	1.04	1.04	1.02	1.04	342,000
C&P Homes Inc.	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.35	1,210,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.33	0.36	0.33	0.36	7,990,000
EIB Realty Developers Inc.	0.28	0.3	0.28	0.3	380,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.59	0.63	0.58	0.61	53,620,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.94	2.1	1.94	2.06	19,349,000
Gotesco Land Inc.	0.17	0.17	0.17	0.17	400,000
Gotesco Land Inc. B	0.17	0.2	0.17	0.2	300,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.27	0.32	0.27	0.32	9,600,000
Fil-Estate Land Inc.	0.78	0.78	0.78	0.78	1,470,000
MRC Allied Ind. Inc.	0.25	0.31	0.25	0.29	9,420,000
Philippine Estates Corp.	0.23	0.23	0.215	0.23	2,600,000
Primex Corp.	3.7	3.7	3.7	3.7	110,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	3.75	3.8	3.75	3.8	357,000
Phil Realty and Holdings	0.29	0.29	0.29	0.29	170,000
SM Development Corp.	1.86	1.86	1.84	1.84	569,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	9	9	8.9	9	4,423,000
MINING					
Apex Mining Co. Inc. A	1.1	1.1	1.08	1.08	33,000
Apex Mining Co. Inc. B	1.06	1.1	1.06	1.1	150,000
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.012	0.013	0.012	0.012	102,000,000
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	6	6.2	6	6.1	530,000
Benguet Corp. A	8	8	8	8	11,000
Dizon Copper Silver Mines	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.4	22,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.4	0.41	0.39	0.39	13,730,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.43	0.45	0.43	0.43	16,280,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	224,500,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.028	0.029	0.028	0.028	117,000,000
Omico Corp.	0.0095	0.01	0.0095	0.0095	1,438,000,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	1.16	1.2	1.16	1.2	3,329,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	1.46	1.48	1.44	1.46	5,073,000
Semirara Mining Corp.	44	46	44	45.5	1,317,600
United Paragon Mining Co.	0.32	0.32	0.3	0.31	700,000
OIL					
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.0075	0.008	0.0075	0.0075	263,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.008	0.008	0.008	0.008	3,000,000
The Philodrill Corp. A	0.36	0.36	0.36	0.36	150,000
The Philodrill Corp. B	0.38	0.38	0.38	0.38	20,000
Pacifica	0.015	0.015	0.015	0.015	38,000,000
Petroenergy Res. Corp.	2.9	3	2.9	3	100,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.24	0.24	0.23	0.23	6,770,000
Vulcan Ind'l	0.42	0.42	0.41	0.41	670,000

CURRENCIES

March 9, 2005 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.749400	1.000000	54.6730
Japan	Yen	0.007159	0.009553	0.5223
United Kingdom	Pound	1.445444	1.928800	105.4533
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.096082	0.128212	7.0097
Switzerland	Franc	0.644978	0.860659	47.0548
Canada	Dollar	0.617553	0.824063	45.0540
Singapore	Dollar	0.462222	0.616789	33.7217
Australia	Dollar	0.597942	0.797894	43.6233
Bahrain	Dinar*	1.987852	2.652590	145.0251
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.199829	0.266652	14.5787
Brunei	Dollar	0.460801	0.614893	33.6180
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000080	0.000107	0.0059
Thailand	Baht	0.019567	0.026110	1.4275
UAE	Dirham	0.204035	0.272264	14.8855
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.334400	72.9557
Argentina	Peso	0.255768	0.341297	18.6597
Brazil	Real	0.277504	0.370302	20.2455
Denmark	Kroner	0.134287	0.179192	9.7970
India	Rupee	0.017196	0.022946	1.2545
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.197237	0.263193	14.3896
Mexico	New Peso	0.068242	0.091062	4.9786
New Zealand	Dollar	0.554536	0.739973	40.4565
Norway	Kroner	0.122166	0.163018	8.9127
Pakistan	Rupee	0.012648	0.016878	0.9228
South Africa	Rand	0.130206	0.173747	9.4993
Korea	Won	0.000746	0.000996	0.0545
Sweden	Kroner	0.110793	0.147842	8.0830
Syria	Pound	0.014436	0.019264	1.0532
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.024315	0.032446	1.7739
Venezuela	Bolivar	0.000349	0.000466	0.0255

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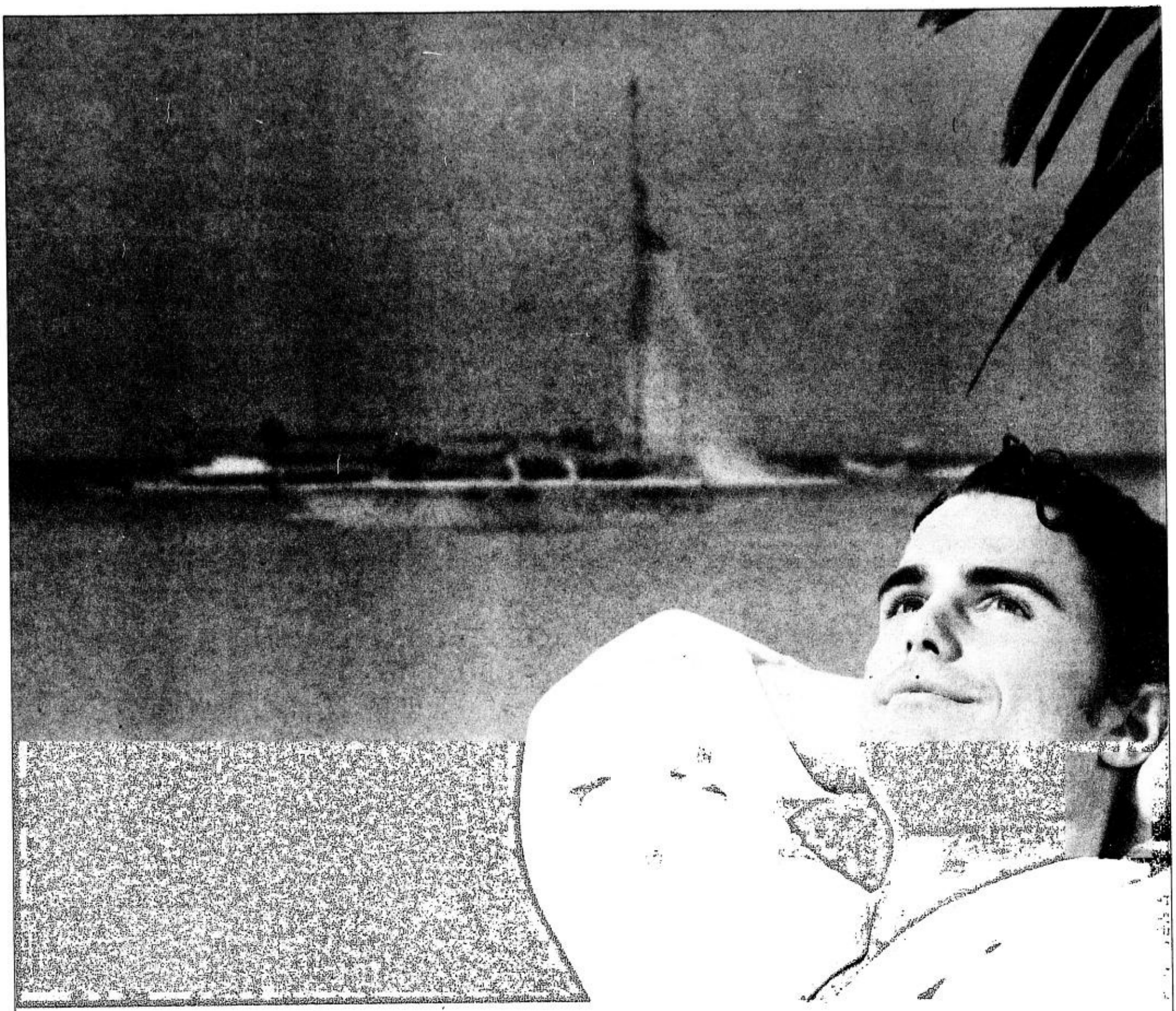
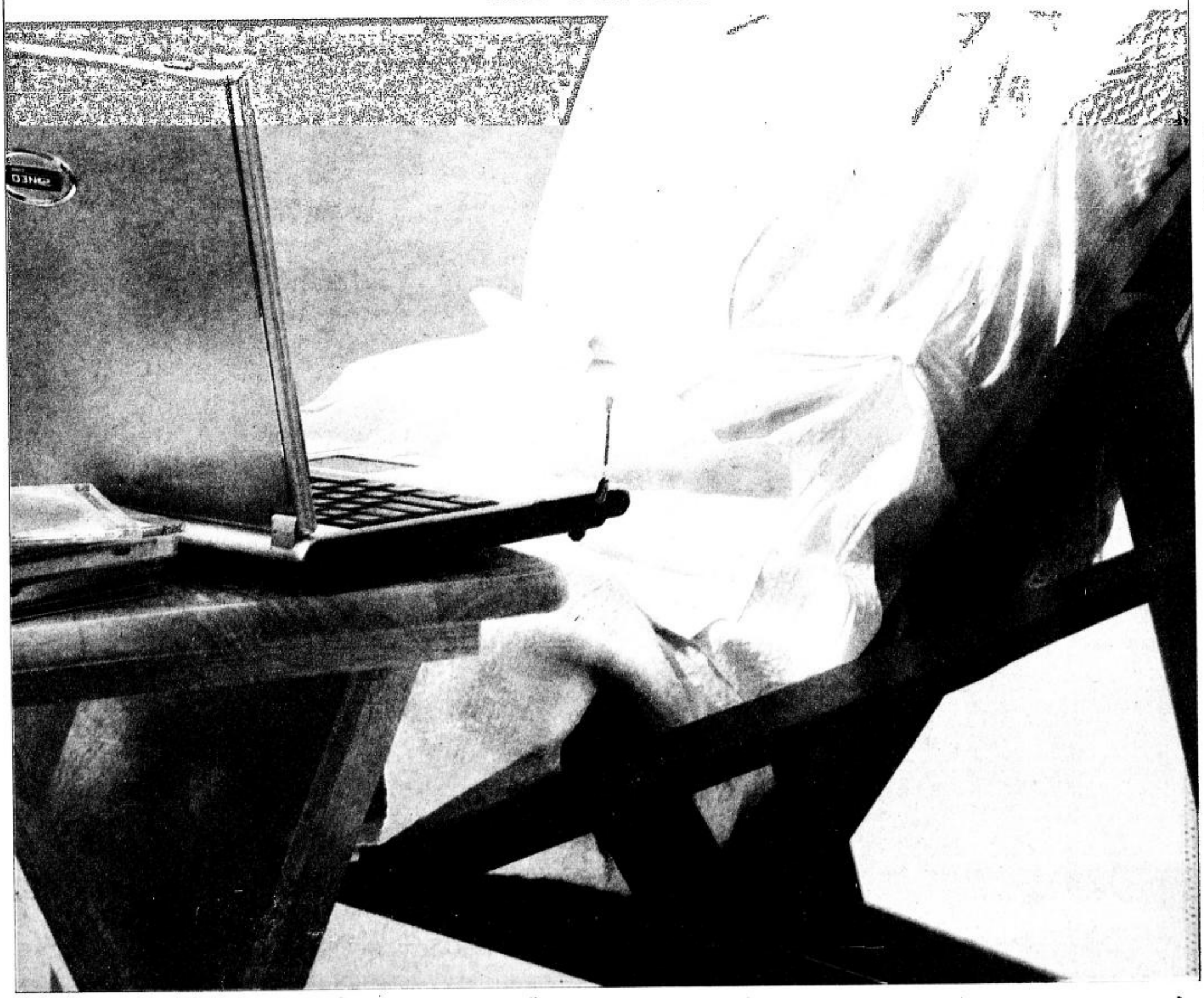


STEP INTO MY OFFICE.



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For twenty-four years Eternal Plans has made a difference in the lives of planholders, their beneficiaries and scholars. It has changed lives. It has been instrumental in the realization of a lot of dreams. It has touched people during their deepest pains. Indeed, Eternal Plans has become a part of the lives of so many.

Eternal Plans' name is etched not in granite stone, but in the hearts of its people and planholders. And while it highlights one successful year after another, it creates history and builds its treasures in the people it serves.

A company thousands have trusted and relied on, Eternal Plans unfailingly delivers its commitments over the years.

FROLICS 2004
Grand vacation in Hongkong
March 10-12, 2005

Messages

I join the entire Eternal Plans, Incorporated family on the occasion of your 24th Annual Awards.

This event is proof that goals can be attained if there are well-motivated and hard working individuals who defy the odds to attain productivity. Such distinguished men and women deserve commendation. They are the people behind the success of your company and contributors to national development.

Indeed, the pre-need industry gives the Filipino family hope and the wherewithal to face the vicissitudes of life in the future. Thus, recognition is also in order for Eternal Plans for providing educational, pension and memorial life plans for the past 24 years and in the process, helping strengthen our country's financial capital market.

I congratulate this year's top sales achievers. May this recognition prod you to higher levels of accomplishment.

More power to all of you!

GLORIA MACAPAGAL-ARROYO

On your 24th Year Anniversary, I congratulate all of you at Eternal Plans for your unrelenting efforts in raising the quality of Filipino life today and of the future. May your successes continue to imbibe the values of hard work and determination among our brothers and sisters as you deliver your services with faith and commitment.

I give highest commendation to your sales achievers who have performed admirably in the past year in spite of a challenging economic performance. Your perseverance to arm every Filipino with security for the future marks your Christian concern for all people.

Happy anniversary and may the Lord endlessly bless you with more success, professionally and personally.

GAUDENCIO B. ROSALES, D.D.
Archbishop of Manila

Our warmest greetings and sincere congratulations to the men and women of Eternal Plans, Inc. as you celebrate your 24th Anniversary and 24th Grand Annual Awards Night.

Recently, the pre-need industry has been under close scrutiny in view of proposals to improve the regulation of the pre-need companies the SEC covers. A pre-need code is strongly being pushed and nine proposals are now pending with Congress. We in the Department of Finance join all of you in this move to strengthen the industry, to protect the interests of both the pre-need companies and all pre-need plan holders.

The Department of Finance also joins your organization in honoring the Eternal Plans' top sales producers of the year. I personally commend all of you as you continue to be the government's vigorous partners in capital market development.

Thank you for helping our country move forward.
Happy 24th year anniversary!

CESAR V. PURISIMA
Acting Secretary of Finance

We at the Securities and Exchange Commission join Eternal Life Plans, Inc. in honoring its Top Sales Achievers for 2004.

Every year has challenges and opportunities of its own. Thus, the giving of sales awards for 2004, despite being a tradition at Eternal Plans, Inc. should be viewed as unique and a standout from the previous ones. The year that passed had not only brought a close watch and public scrutiny to one or two pre-need companies but to the entire industry as well. The top sales figures recorded in 2004 were therefore the result of the dedication, persistence, and extra efforts put in by every awardee. Exemplary achievements do not just happen; they have to be earned. A pre-need company's track record in delivering what it promises to its investors is also a tremendous sales booster.

Our warmest congratulations go to the top sales honorees. This is also the time to renew the challenge to every salesperson, that topnotch performance is not beyond your reach – as long as you do your share – and Eternal Plans, Inc. stands committed to provide a secure and better future to its clients. Happy 24th Anniversary!

FE B. BARIN
Chairperson, Securities and Exchange Commission

I join the directors, officers and staff of Eternal Plans, Inc. as you celebrate your 24th Year Anniversary & Annual Awards 2004 and congratulate all our sales achievers for their ceaseless efforts and dedication to elevate the standard of Filipino living by way of securities investments.

Many success stories account for the pre-need sector's progressive approach as the Filipino opts to prepare for the future. Its thrust mobilizes the country to look forward arming each and everyone with the appropriate instruments to welcome the coming years.

With the current issues affecting the industry today, it is highly admirable that Eternal Plans has its feet on the ground, so to speak, more focused than ever in its solemn commitment to deliver its services to the public. With this, I give you the highest accolades as you go about fulfilling your mission as innovators and keepers of the future.

May Eternal Plans continue to thrive and flourish as we welcome more developments in the pre-need industry.

Happy 24th Year Anniversary!

Ambassador ANTONIO L. CABANGON CHUA
Founder and Chairman Emeritus

Grand Annual Awards Night

March 9, 2005 • Heritage Ballroom • The Heritage Hotel Manila, Pasay City

2004 Top Sales Achievers

ANNUAL SALES 2004 WINNERS

Regular Sales

Josephine C. Mallari
San Fernando, Pampanga
1st Place
Area Manager Level

Divina S. Basilio
San Fernando, Pampanga
1st Place
District Manager Level

Paterno C. Rubio
San Fernando, Pampanga
1st Place
Sales Counselor Level

Institutional Sales

Sarah F. Ronquillo
Urdaneta, Pangasinan
1st Place
Sales Counselor Level

FOUNDER'S CUP 2004 WINNERS

Regular Sales

Josephine C. Mallari
San Fernando, Pampanga
1st Place
Area Manager Level

Edensueda C. Mercado
Batangas
2nd Place
Area Manager Level

Airene M. Mendoza
Batangas
1st Place
District Manager Level

Divina S. Basilio
San Fernando, Pampanga
2nd Place
District Manager Level

Romulo C. Mercado, Jr.
Batangas
1st Place
Sales Counselor Level

Jenifer P. Obalobao
Kalibo, Aklan
2nd Place
Sales Counselor Level

Paterno C. Rubio
San Fernando, Pampanga
3rd Place
Sales Counselor Level

Ruth Rena D. Resurreccion
Lucena
4th Place
Sales Counselor Level

Michael M. Rapio
Batangas
5th Place
Sales Counselor Level

TREASURER'S CHRISTMAS CHEERS 2004 WINNERS

Regular Sales

Josephine C. Mallari
San Fernando, Pampanga
1st Place
Area Manager Level

Divina S. Basilio
San Fernando, Pampanga
1st Place
District Manager Level

Alrene M. Mendoza
Batangas
2nd Place
District Manager Level

Gerardo Q. Sonido
Laoag
1st Place
Sales Counselor Level

Paterno C. Rubio
San Fernando, Pampanga
2nd Place
Sales Counselor Level

Nelson G. Suguitan
Alaminos
3rd Place
Sales Counselor Level

Romulo C. Mercado, Jr.
Batangas
4th Place
Sales Counselor Level

Michael M. Rapio
Batangas
5th Place
Sales Counselor Level

Institutional Sales

Gina F. Ronquillo
Urdaneta
1st Place
Area Manager Level

Graciela N. Ronquillo
Urdaneta
1st Place
District Manager Level

Sarah F. Ronquillo
Urdaneta, Pangasinan
1st Place
Sales Counselor Level

Baldomero A. Raneses
Lucena
2nd Place
Sales Counselor Level

HANDOG SA PANGULO 2004 WINNERS

Regular Sales

Josephine C. Mallari
San Fernando, Pampanga
1st Place
Area Manager Level

Divina S. Basilio
San Fernando, Pampanga
1st Place
District Manager Level

Institutional Sales

Jenifer P. Obalobao
Kalibo, Aklan
1st Place
Sales Counselor Level

Paterno C. Rubio
San Fernando, Pampanga
2nd Place
Sales Counselor Level

Marie Lou A. Abalajen
Bacolod
3rd Place
Sales Counselor Level

Ronaldo B. Hizon
Bataan
4th Place
Sales Counselor Level

Ma. Elena P. Talabis
Lucena
5th Place
Sales Counselor Level

Ma. Babylin S. Tero
Paoy
1st Place
Sales Counselor Level

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Fitch seen to keep current RP rating

MACTAN, Cebu—London-based credit rating agency Fitch Ratings is not likely to follow its US counterparts Standard & Poor's and Moody's Investor Service in downgrading the country's sovereign credit rating, according to UBS Investment Bank of Switzerland.

The country had turned the fiscal corner, top UBS officials for Asia said when they met with President Macapagal-Arroyo at the sidelines of the Philippine Investment Conference yesterday.

Yesterday's conference was organized by Euromoney.

Scott Wilson, executive director of UBS Investment Research, yesterday said Fitch Ratings was likely to keep its current sovereign credit rating on the Philippines when the rating agency announces its latest evaluation in the next few weeks.

"There is a strong likelihood that Fitch will preserve the rating at BB because of the progress being made on the fiscal side and the potential FDI (foreign direct inflows) into the mining and power sector," he said.

In its November assessment, Fitch Ratings spared the Philippines from a debt rating downgrade, but changed its outlook to "negative" from "stable" due to heightened concerns on fiscal vulnerability.

Its long-term foreign and local currency ratings on the country stood at "BB," two notches below investment grade.

Last month, Moody's lowered the Philippines' sovereign credit ratings by two notches, warning of heightened vulnerability to economic, financial and political shocks due to ballooning public debts. This action was even tougher than the one-notch downgrade of Standard & Poor's in January.

Asked whether Fitch was likely to retain the "negative" outlook as well, Wilson said: "My sense is that they (Fitch) are waiting for Congress to make a move on the VAT (value-added tax)."

"It will be the major determinant of their rating," he added.

Doris C. Dumlao

POOR MARKETING TACK

Vehicle sales down 1.6% in 1st 2 months

By Ronnel W. Domingo

LOCAL vehicle assemblers yesterday reported that overall sales went down 1.6 percent in the first two months to 13,332 units from 13,549 in the same period in 2004.

The vehicle assemblers described the industry performance as "stable."

According to a joint report of the Chamber of Automotive Manufacturers of the Philippines (Campi) and the Truck Manufacturers Association, sales of passenger cars and commercial vehicles performed similarly, with respective decreases of 1.5 percent and 1.7 percent.

Passenger car sales slid to 5,320 units from January to February from 5,402 units.

At the same time, commercial vehicle sales went down to 8,012 units from 8,147 units.

"Though industry sales is starting to pick up with the introduction of new vehicle models, (January to February) sales is still lower due to the shortfall in sales last January, wherein assemblers were silent in terms of promo and advertising," the report said.

"Passenger car sales remained relatively stable for the past two months due to constant sales of low displacement models coupled with sustained financing promos offered by major assemblers," the report added.

Campi and TMA said overall sales were seen to increase in March and April.

As for commercial vehicles, sales of Asian Utility Vehicles was flat; light commercial vehicles slid one percent; light trucks slipped 21 percent; and trucks and buses went down 36 percent.

In the first two months, Toyota Motor Philippines Corp. grabbed the largest portion of the overall market, with a 32.6-percent share.

Toyota sold 4,349 units from January to February, or 8.54 percent lower than the 4,755 units it sold in the same period last year.

Mitsubishi Motors Philippines Corp. ranked second with 15.6 percent of the market.

MMPC sold 2,081 vehicles, which was 1.3 percent lower than the 2,108 units it sold the previous year.

Isuzu Philippines Corp. ranked third with 12 percent share of the market.

Isuzu sales reached 1,600 units in the first two months, which was 18 percent higher than the 1,356 units it sold during the same period last year.

Money supply may reach 13% this year, says BSP

By Michelle V. Remo

THE BANGKO Sentral ng Pilipinas is expecting the domestic liquidity (M3) to grow 13 percent in 2005 from only 9.2 percent last year.

BSP officials said the possibly stronger economy this year could heighten the need for money supply.

According to Diwa Guinigundo, BSP assistant governor, the 13-percent projected M3 for this year would take into account the expected gross domestic product (GDP) growth of 5.3 to 6.3 percent, and a 5- to 6-percent inflation.

Domestic liquidity is the amount of money in circulation, Issued checks, which serve as virtual cash, are also included. The M3 figure does not include money in the vaults of private banks and the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas.

Domestic liquidity is one instrument that reflects the economic performance of a country.

"As the economy grows, people find money more useful and therefore demand for money increases," Guinigundo yesterday told reporters.

The BSP said the government expected 2005 to be a better year for the economy compared with the previous year, although the 2004 GDP of 6.1 percent was higher than the target of 4.9 to 5.8 percent.

"Notwithstanding intermittent concerns on the peace and order situation and the recent credit rating downgrades, we are looking forward to better economic prospects in 2005," BSP Governor Rafael Buenaventura said in a speech before members of the Australian-New Zealand Chamber of Commerce in the Philippines Inc. during its membership meeting Tuesday.

According to the BSP's latest report, domestic liquidity posted a year-on-year growth of 10.8 percent in January this year, from only 9.1 percent during the same month the previous year.

The BSP said it had adopted a new method of computing domestic liquidity, through the Depository Corporations Survey, which replaced the Monetary Survey.

FReE to plug leaks in capital gains taxes

THE FOUNDATION for Revenue Enhancement (FReE) recently held a pre-bid conference for a project that is meant to plug the leaks in the capital gains tax on the sale of real property.

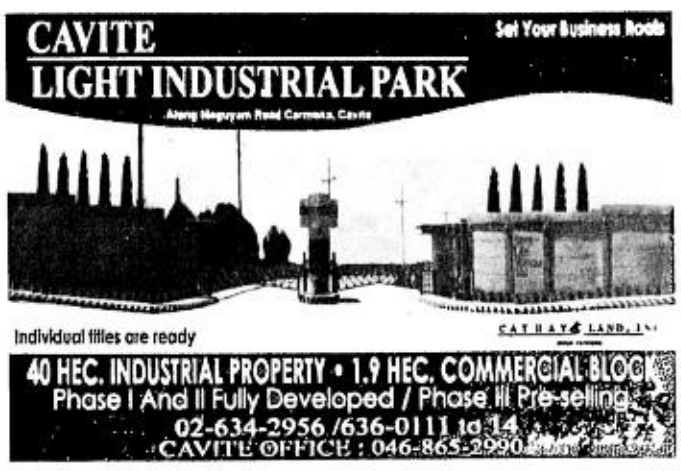
The project, which is called the One-Time Transaction Tax or ONET3, is a joint undertaking of the foundation and the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR).

Attending the pre-bid conference were private sector bidders short-listed for the project, BIR officials, and the foundation's trustees and officers.

The project aims to improve the BIR's collection of capital gains taxes by introducing enabling technologies that would reduce or eliminate the collection system's vulnerability to revenue losses. Through the project, the BIR also intends to build a reliable database for pre- and post-audit.

Initial estimates of capital gains tax losses amounts to at least P2 billion a year due to corruption.

Taxpayers often are harassed by corrupt BIR officials. Some taxpayers also tend to collude with BIR field men to lower their tax liabilities.



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1.0MM - 4,999,999	5.500	5.750	5.875	6.000
5.0MM - 9,999,999	5.750	6.000	6.125	6.250
10 million and up	6.000	6.250	6.500	6.750

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NTC may amend telco policy on competition

By Clarissa S. Batino

THE NATIONAL Telecommunications Commission is studying plans to come up with a new set of regulatory policies for the telco sector that may include setting a specific period in a day during which players could sell their unlimited deals.

"We are looking at new competition policies to augment current rules, especially in light of what's happening right now," said NTC chair Ronald Solis.

Phone companies are coming up with buffet prices for calls and texts to gain more subscribers and expand market share. Solis said instead of allowing buffet promos to run the whole day, the deals could be limited during off-peak hours.

"We have been told that no network ... could accommodate these unlimited promos 24-7," Solis said. "For sure, the system would collapse."

Meanwhile, the Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. said that it has again extended its P10 per call promo by another month to April 11. The promo was supposed to end on March 11.

Butch Jimenez, PLDT head of retail, said the "telebabad" promo could even be extended beyond April 11.

He said three weeks after the promo started on Feb. 14, the number of calls using PLDT jumped to an average of 540,000 a day, from about 390,000 before the P10 call rate.

The number of callers also grew to an average of 146,000 daily against about 100,000 before.

Jimenez said the fixed-line subscriber take-up increased to almost 9,000 a month from about 6,600 before. He said the take-up in landline subscribers had been on the decline.

"We are clearly seeing a revitalization of the landline business with our P10-per-call plan," the PLDT official said. "The public's demand for us to extend the promo, or even make it permanent, is overwhelming, so we decided to extend it to April 11."

Aside from PLDT, others offering unlimited call deals are Sun Cellular and Touch Mobile. PLDT's wireless units are set to launch their own buffet promos by the end of the week.

Sun Cellular, which offers unlimited calls and texts within the network for P250 a month or P100 for 10 days, started the price war when it launched the 24/7 plan in October 2004.

Since then, competitors in the wireless and even fixed-line business had come up with their own offers.

Neda ties up with LGUs to source funds

THE NATIONAL Economic and Development Authority intends to form a tie-up with local government units to help the LGUs in coming up with their own funding resources.

Oskar Balbastro, Neda regional director, said his office would coordinate with LGUs in planning projects and programs in the local level in line with the national government's Medium-Term Philippine Development Plan (MTPDP).

The Neda could also help LGUs come up with financing strategies, Balbastro said.

"The Neda could assist LGUs in tapping alternative financing schemes, such as BOT (build-operate-transfer)," he said in a speech during the executive board meeting of the Vice Mayors League of the Philippines recently held in Romblon.

Balbastro said that while the Neda could give technical assistance in project development, the LGUs could provide manpower and logistics support, as well as the required counterpart funds. He stressed the need for LGUs to design projects and programs that would be consistent with the MTPDP.

The Neda official urged local government officials to take an active role in developing the economic activities in their respective localities, according to the instruction of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

The Neda and other economic agencies have been urging local governments to become financially independent of the national government, which is still burdened by its lingering fiscal problem.

Michelle V. Remo

Gov't expected to further open . . .

From page B1

however, can be addressed through the commercialization of voice over Internet protocol (VOIP), he added.

However, telecom companies, including Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co., have expressed reservation about moves to liberalize the use of VOIP too soon. They said such a move would adversely affect their earnings from long distance calls.

In the same forum, PLDT chair Manuel Pangilinan said the government must first ensure that the telecom industry was ready to compete with the VOIP technology and the sector must be allowed a "soft landing."

Neri explained to reporters at the sidelines of the forum that the government was waiting for the National Telecommunication Commission to come up with a ruling on VOIP, which he said would likely happen within this year. The use of VOIP, he said, could slash long distance charges to 10 cents from the current 40 cents per minute.

"VOIP is there. They (telecom companies) know they can't stop it. It's like sunshine. People sooner or later will open the window," Neri said.

In the airline industry, he said the government had already started with an open skies policy in Clark. He said the Department of Transportation was open to adopting the same arrangement in Davao, General Santos and the soon-to-open Cagayan de Oro airport, although exclusively for cargo.

On the power sector, he said the government was fast-tracking the selling of National Power Corp. to open up access to Meralco on the distribution side.

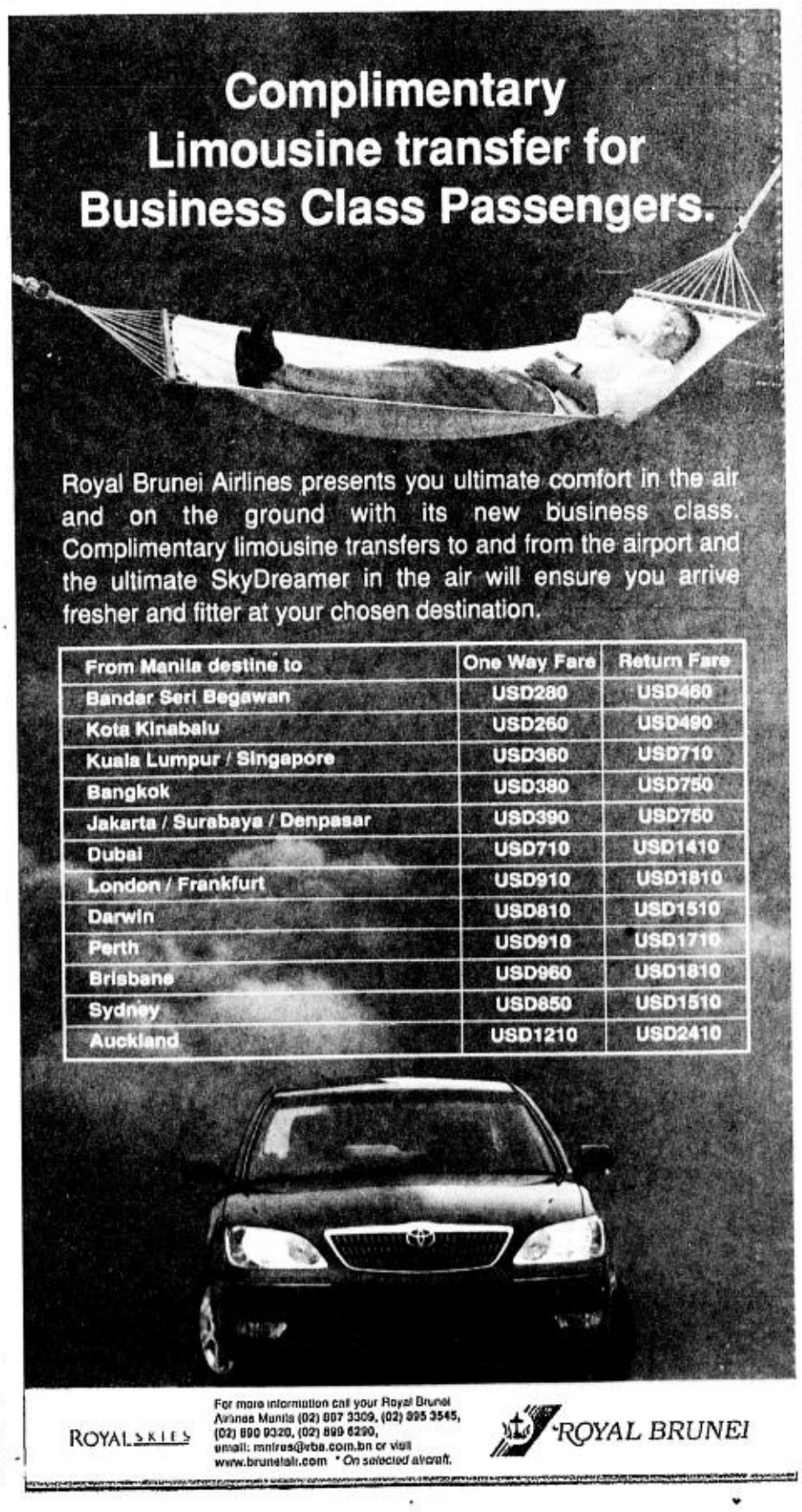
"The generators can pass through (Meralco)—like a road, Meralco will become a toll road whereby the generator can sell to retailer or user downstream," he said.

"Once 70 percent of Napocor is privatized, we can start doing open access," he said.

Further liberalization is likewise needed on the shipping sector, he said, to allow the entry of more players.

"Although it has been liberalized already, it's still a bit expensive," he said.

On the ports, he said the sector should be opened up and the Philippine Port Authority's regulatory function should be separated from its functions as owners of certain ports.



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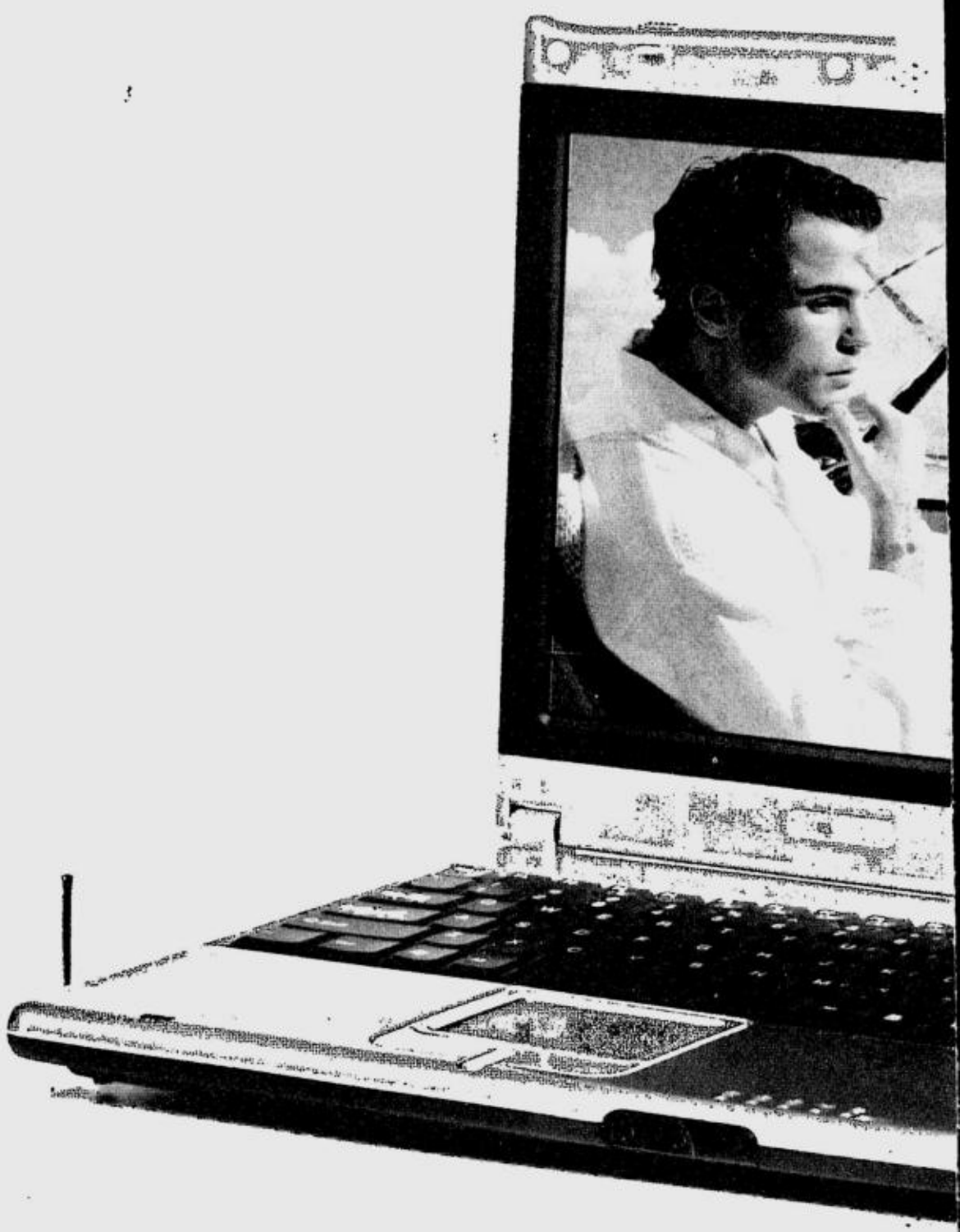

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IMPLEMENTING RULES AND REGULATIONS OF EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 253, PROVIDING FOR THE EXPANSION OF AIR SERVICES TO THE DIOSDADO MACAPAGAL INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT (DMIA) AND SUBIC BAY INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT (SBIA)

Pursuant to Section 4 of Executive Order No. 253 dated 03 December 2003, the following rules and regulations are hereby adopted:

RULE I
GENERAL PROVISIONS

1.0 THE FOLLOWING RULES AND REGULATIONS SHALL BE KNOWN AND CITED AS THE "IMPLEMENTING RULES AND REGULATIONS OF EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 253."

1.1 Executive Order No. 253 seeks to further liberalize civil aviation in the Philippines specifically through the grant or enhancement of certain air cargo traffic rights to and from the Diosdado Macapagal International Airport (DMIA) and Subic Bay International Airport (SBIA).
Its provisions are intended to promote the expansion of air cargo services to DMIA and SBIA. Hence, these Implementing Rules and Regulations ("IRR") are designed to facilitate access to the aforementioned airports and shall not be interpreted, in the case of ambiguity, to restrict such access.

1.2 For purposes of application and construction of these rules, the following terms shall have the meanings and definitions specified hereunder. Moreover, the following definitions shall control the application and construction of these Implementing Rules and Regulations.

1.2.1 "Air Carrier" means a person who undertakes directly or by lease or any other arrangements, to engage in air transportation or air commerce;
1.2.2 "Board" shall refer to the Civil Aeronautics Board;
1.2.3 "International air cargo transportation" means the transportation of cargo and/or mail by air between the Philippines and any place outside it by pure cargo carriers;
1.2.4 "Development route" means a route, destination or gateway which must be fully promoted and supported to enhance its potential as centers of economic growth and activity;
1.2.5 "Capacity" refers to the quantitative measurement of the supply of air transportation service expressed whether in (a) number of flight frequencies, (b) units of weight or space for cargo operations, (c) aircraft types, or (d) a combination of any of the above;
1.2.6 "Non-cabotage traffic rights" cover any right to carry traffic to and from DMIA and SBIA in international air cargo transportation as defined herein except the right to carry traffic from one point in the territory of the Philippines to another point therein;
1.2.7 "Point" is a destination, specified or unspecified, on a route;

1.3 Any other term (not specifically defined hereunder) used in these Implementing Rules and Regulations that is defined in Republic Act No. 776 as amended or the Implementing Rules and Regulations of Executive Order Nos. 219 (series of 1995) and 32 (series of 2001) establishing the domestic and international civil aviation liberalization policy shall be interpreted in accordance with such definition;

RULE II
AUTHORITY TO OPERATE

2.0 PETITION TO ENGAGE IN INTERNATIONAL AIR CARGO TRANSPORTATION TO AND FROM DMIA AND/OR SBIA UNDER EO 253 AND FOR WAIVER OF RESTRICTIONS OR LIMITATIONS ON CAPACITY, TYPE OF AIRCRAFT OR NON-CABOTAGE TRAFFIC RIGHTS.

2.1 Foreign cargo carriers with or without authority to operate to and from DMIA and/or SBIA, or with or without existing Air Service Agreements (ASA) shall file a verified petition with the Board for an authority to engage in international air cargo transportation and for waiver of restrictions or limitations on capacity, type of aircraft or non-cabotage traffic rights with respect to its operation to and from DMIA and/or SBIA under the provisions of EO 253, after furnishing all Philippine carriers engaged in international air cargo transportation with copies thereof.

2.2 The petition shall specify the routes to be operated with DMIA and/or SBIA as gateway points, the capacity to be offered on such routes on a weekly basis, the types of aircraft to be operated thereon and start-up dates of such operations; Provided, those with existing ASA shall include a verified certification that the applicant air cargo carriers opts to operate to and from DMIA and/or SBIA under EO 253 in lieu of the rights granted under pertinent ASA and that it shall not mix its rights to operate to other Philippine points as may be granted under the ASA with its rights to be granted under EO 253; Provided further, that if the Board decides to grant the petition, the decision shall expressly state, among others, that the applicant air cargo carrier shall not operate air services to and from DMIA and SBIA in accordance with any rights granted to it under pertinent ASA during the period of validity of the authority granted pursuant to EO 253 and that it shall not mix its rights to operate to other Philippine points as may be granted under the ASA with its rights to be granted under EO 253;

2.3 In determining the merits of a petition, the Board shall consider that air access to DMIA and SBIA is declared as a development route. Hence, the authority to operate such route may be granted without any restrictions on frequency or capacity, aircraft configuration and non-cabotage traffic rights, except as may otherwise be demanded by the operational, commercial, security and safety requirements for the operation of air cargo services to and from the DMIA and SBIA;

2.4 The Board shall review and assess the request of the applicant against the current operational, commercial, security and safety requirements of operating air cargo services to and from DMIA and SBIA taking into consideration comments that may have been filed by interested parties within seven (7) days from receipt of notice;

2.5 If the Board finds that the petition is sufficient in form and substance and allowable on the basis of technical, operational and commercial requirements of operating to and from DMIA and/or SBIA, the same shall be favorably granted. Otherwise, the Board shall conduct a hearing on the petition to be completed and resolved within thirty (30) days from the date of the first hearing. During the interim, the Board may issue provisional orders for the protection of the rights of the parties.

3.0 PETITIONS FILED BY FOREIGN AIR CARRIERS FOR AUTHORITY TO OPERATE INTERNATIONAL CARGO CHARTER (NON-SCHEDULED) FLIGHTS TO AND FROM DMIA AND SBIA SHALL BE GOVERNED BY CHAPTER III OF ECONOMIC REGULATION NO. 2 ENTITLED "ECONOMIC REGULATION ON CHARTER FLIGHTS" APPROVED BY THE BOARD ON 15 SEPTEMBER 1969.

RULE III
TARIFF AND RATES

The Board shall ensure that consumers are not subjected to discriminatory prices or practices or prices that are unreasonably high or restrictive due to abuse of dominant position. Likewise, no air carrier shall engage in predatory pricing resulting in artificially low or uneconomic prices.

It is the duty of the Board to investigate and initiate actions against any practice or violation of the above pricing mechanisms.

RULE IV
VALIDITY

4.0 THE RIGHT TO OPERATE TO AND FROM DMIA AND SBIA GRANTED HEREIN SHALL BE EFFECTIVE FOR A PERIOD FOR FIVE (5) YEARS, RENEWABLE UPON PETITION OF THE GRANTEE AND COTERMINOUS WITH THE FOREIGN AIR CARRIER'S PERMIT ISSUED BY THE BOARD UNDER REPUBLIC ACT 776. THE PETITION FOR RENEWAL MUST BE FILED THIRTY (30) DAYS PRIOR TO THE DATE OF THE EXPIRATION OF THE PERMIT.

4.1 The waiver of restrictions to operate air cargo services to and from DMIA and SBIA shall be effective for a period of one (1) year renewable upon petition of grantee. The petition for renewal must be filed within thirty (30) days prior to the date of the expiration of the permit. The waiver shall be coterminous with the permit granted under 4.1 and the FACP issued by the Board under R.A. 776.

RULE V
FEES

5.0 FILING FEES

a)	Application/Renewal of right to operate:	PHP 75,000.00
b)	Application/Renewal of waiver of restrictions:	PHP 15,000.00

5.1 The Board may amend the schedule of filing fees as the need arises.

RULE VI
INSPECTION

Pursuant to its mandated powers under R.A. 776, the Board may inspect the premises and operations of international air cargo carriers operating within the DMIA and SBIA to ensure the proper implementation of Executive Order No. 253

RULE VII
VIOLATIONS AND PENALTIES

Any violation of the provisions of Executive Order No. 253 and of this IRR shall be penalized in accordance with the pertinent provisions of R.A. 776.

RULE VIII
RESERVATION CLAUSE

The Board reserves the right to amend, repeal or modify this IRR as warranted by circumstance or events to which the objectives of Executive Order 253 and consistent with the provisions of R.A. 776, may be served.

RULE IX
SEPARABILITY CLAUSE

If any section or any part of this IRR shall be declared unconstitutional by a competent authority, the remaining section or parts thereof shall not thereby be affected.

RULE X
REPEALING CLAUSE

All other resolutions, economic regulations and other issuance by the Board which are inconsistent with the herein provisions are hereby amended, repealed or modified accordingly.

RULE XI
EFFECTIVITY

These rules shall take effect (15) days after its publication in a newspaper of general circulation. A copy of these rules shall be deposited with the University of the Philippines Law Center in compliance with the Revised Administrative Code of 1987.

APPROVED, 04 March 2005

USEC. EDWARD HARUN V. PAGUNSAN
Alternate Chairman

Asst. Sec. NILO C. JATICO
Vice Chairman

Atty. FLORENTINO M. HERRERA III
Member

Attested by:
CARMELO L. ARCILLA
Deputy Executive Director
(Acting Board Secretary)

(PDI – March 10, 2005)

ANNOUNCEMENT

Manulife has completed moving its Quezon Avenue operations from our offices at the 2nd and 4th floors of the Ave Maria Building, to our Pasig offices at the Tektite Tower (PSE Centre). This now makes Manulife's presence in the Ortigas business district our second largest operation, next only to our Head Offices at the LKG Tower along Ayala Avenue (Makati).

30/F Philippine Stock Exchange Centre
West Tower, Exchange Road
Ortigas Centre, Pasig City
Trunkline : 636-2721 • Fax : 636-2777

For the convenience of Manulife clients accustomed to paying their premiums at our former Quezon Avenue office, payments will continue to be accepted over the counter in any of the following nearby bank branches:

Bank of the Philippine Islands
BPI West Triangle Branch
1587 Quezon Avenue

Equitable PCI Bank
Scout Albano Branch
1488 Quezon Avenue

Manulife

The Manufacturers Life Insurance Company (Philippines), Inc.
Head Office: LKG Tower, 6801 Ayala Avenue, 1226 Makati City
Trunkline: 88-4-LIFE (884-5433) • Email:phcustsrv@manulife.com

Republic of the Philippines
REGIONAL TRIAL COURT, National Capital Judicial Region
Branch 60, City of Makati

METROPOLITAN BANK & TRUST CO
Plaintiff(s)

- versus -

CIVIL CASE NO. 98-110

FASHION FORESIGHTS, INC. and MOSHE AMIR,
Defendant(s)

SUMMONS

TO: FASHION FORESIGHTS, INC., No. 8478 KM. 14, West Service Road, South Superhighway, Parañaque City

MOSHE AMIR
Rm. 21 West Service Road, South Superhighway, Parañaque City

GREETINGS:

You are hereby directed to file your ANSWER to the COMPLAINT [illegible] WITNESS the HON. MARISSA MACARAIG-GUILLEN, Judge of this Court, this 28th day of December, 2004, City of Makati.

(Sgd.) MARY JANE P. LABAN
OIC/Legal Researcher

RECEIVED COPY OF THE SUMMONS AND PETITION

Respondent(s) Date

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
REGIONAL TRIAL COURT, NATIONAL CAPITAL JUDICIAL REGION
CITY OF MAKATI, BRANCH 60

METROPOLITAN BANK & TRUST CO.,
Plaintiff

- versus -

CIVIL CASE NO. 98110
for SUM OF MONEY

FASHION FORESIGHTS, INC. and MOSHE AMIR,
Defendants

COMPLAINT

[illegible]

FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION

[illegible]

SECOND CAUSE OF ACTION

[illegible]

THIRD CAUSE OF ACTION

[illegible]

ALLEGATIONS COMMON TO ALL CAUSES OF ACTION

[illegible]

PRAYER

[illegible]

PEREZ & CALIMA LAW OFFICES
Counsel for the Plaintiff
[illegible]

VERIFICATION AND CERTIFICATION

[illegible]

(PDI – February 24 & March 3 & 10, 2005)

POEA 24-HR HOTLINES
722-1144 • 722-1155

PRISM
PRIVATE SECTOR MOBILIZATION FOR FAMILY PLANNING

The Private Sector Mobilization for Family Planning (PRISM), a project funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) under contract number 492-C-00-04-00036-00 and implemented by a consortium led by Chemonics International, Inc. is soliciting offers for:

Conduct of Training Needs Assessment (TNA) of Solo Private Practice Midwives in the National Capital Region, Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao

Background

The PRISM Project is supporting the development of a Midwife Entrepreneur Program (MEP) which is designed to provide private practice midwives with clinical knowledge and skills in providing family planning services, access to contraceptive commodities that would be affordable to their clientele, improved business management skills and access to investment capital required to improve or expand their private practice. In establishing the MEP, PRISM will undertake a series of studies to identify and understand the different midwife private practice types, including organization and content of services and service delivery strategies; assess the degree to which family planning is incorporated in their practice; determine cost structures of midwife private practice and investment needs to improve the financial performance and ability to expand midwife private practice to include improved family planning services.

Qualification Requirements

- Must have a proven track record in the conduct of mapping research, surveys or profiling activities and completed a similar engagement within the last 3 years;
- Have established network with midwifery associations and other relevant organizations to facilitate data gathering;
- Have a team of qualified personnel to manage and execute the expected outputs;
- Have an existing cadre of interviewers and field supervisors who are experienced in the conduct of health survey research
- Must be a Philippine-registered institution or organization;
- Must be in operation for the past 5 years;
- Must have a positive net worth for the year 2004

For a copy of the Request for Proposal, please get in touch with Ms. Ces G. Pangilinan, Funds Specialist at (02) 397-2359; 397-2362. You may also email: cpangilinan@prism.org.ph.

The deadline for submission of proposals is on March 28, 2005.

The Pre-Bid Conference is scheduled on March 15, 2005 from 2:00 – 5:00 pm at the PRISM Office, Suite 1905 Galleria Corporate Center, EDSA, Quezon City.

JOB Market ONLINE
VISIT US AT:
www.jobmarketonline.com

Creative Problem Solving Seminar at MEPCO

MATSUSHITA Electric Philippines Corporation (MEPCO), an industry leader in home appliance manufacturing through the Panasonic Regional Training Center (Singapore) will hold a two-day "Creative Problem Solving Seminar" on March 11-12, 2005 at its training center in Taytay, Rizal. The program is sponsored by the Foundation for Asian Management Development (FAMD), a Japan-based organization in which Matsushita Electric Industrial Co. Ltd. (MEI Japan) is a member. FAMD is tasked with assisting other Asian countries in their Management Development efforts. Tapped to conduct the program is Mr. Reandy Yang of the Panasonic Regional Training Center Singapore. This seminar is open to the supervisors, managers and key officers of MEPCO, its dealers, as well as other individuals who seek to improve their cretive problem solving skills. For inquiries, please contact Engr. Angelo P. Tamayo or Miss Barbs T. Fernandez at TEL. # 284-2293 or 635-2260 loc. 2821-22. Interested parties may also e-mail their inquiries or reservations at hdc@mepco.panasonic.com.ph

PALSCON FORGES TIES WITH SENATOR JINGGOY ESTRADA

The Philippine Association of Labor Service Contractors (Palscon), the only highly recognized Legitimate Service Contractors by the Department of Labor and Employment paid courtesy call to Senator Jinggoy Estrada, the Senate Chair of Labor Committee. Palscon forged ties with the Senator to help and develop the quality of employment in the Philippines that will bridge the gap of the employment's law of supply and demand. On the photo are officers and board of directors of Palscon (from left): Loida Bautista of Bayanihan Placement & Mgt Services, Nelia Castro of Red Dragon Resources & Trading, Gary Manongsong of Stand-out Service Contracting Corp, Rowena Maceren of Globalink Employment Services Inc, Linda Dichoson of Almer Manpower Corp and immediate past president of Palscon, Maricor Malitao of Standout Service Contracting Corp, Senator Jinggoy Estrada, Lilia Linda Ang of Skills and Talent Employment Pool Inc and President of Palscon, Rafael S. Chico of Interlink Manpower Development & General Services Inc, Emma Pabilio of Philippine Pinoy Manpower Services, Evelyn Arreo of EM Arreo Consultancy & Manpower, and Alex T. Flor of Interlink Manpower Development & General Services Inc.

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"For God so loved the World, that He gave us His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have Everlasting life."
—John 3:16

ENRIQUE CLEMENTE, Jr.

Entregó su alma al Creador el 20 de Febrero del 2005
en Los Angeles, California a la edad de 84 años.

Su desconsolada esposa **Tere**, hijos **Ricky y Charo, Jo, Chiqui y Tony Diy**, nietos **Fonsi, Henry, André, Mikey, René, Antón y Krystina**
hermanos, hermanas y demás familia ruegan al piadoso lector pidan en sus oraciones por su alma.

Sus restos se traerán a Manila el 14 de Marzo y la velación tendrá lugar en la Iglesia de Saint James the Great, Ayala Alabang.
Los servicios funerales se Hevarán a cabo el 15 de Marzo después de la santa misa a las cuatro de la tarde.

In Loving Remembrance

AMBASSADOR LOUIS S. COSON

(March 12, 1949 – March 27, 2003)

A Mass will be offered for him on Saturday, 12 March 2005
9:00 AM at the
Shrine of Jesus, the Way, the Truth, and the Life
Bay City, Pasay City

His wife, **Tessie**; children **Jean Louis, Marie Louise** and **Nicole Louise** request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

*"Lord, You know what is best for all of us.
help us to be resigned to Your Will."*
Gerardine's Prayer

Our Dearest Papang

DR. JESUS FERI FERAREN

of Vigan, Ilocos Sur & BF Homes, Parañaque

*peacefully returned to our Heavenly Father on March 7, 2005 at the age of 97, and joyfully joins his loving children **Baby Grace Mita, Salvador, Samson** and **Gerardine**.*

His devoted & caring wife **Natividad**, and loving children: **Grace Mita** (†), **Salvador** (†), **Samson** (†), **Serafin, Sr. Natividad de Jesus, SPC (Gloria/Mita), Grace, Gemma, Gerardine** (†), **Germaine** and **Germeline Alice Virginia (Alvi)**, sister, **Juanita**, sister-in-law **Matilde** (†), daughters-in-law, grandchildren, great grandchildren, relatives and friends request prayers for Papang's eternal rest, peace and happiness in Heaven.

His remains lie in state at Fr. Wilmann SJ Suite, Holy Trinity Memorial Chapels, Sucat, Road. Parañaque City after the 1:30 p.m. Mass at the Holy Trinity Memorial Chapels.

RICARDO "DING" C. CRUZ

Born June 3, 1948

Peacefully passed away in the Grace of our Lord on March 7, 2005.

His beloved wife **Edna**, children **Trisha & Willy Cuason, Lally & Chris Dizon, Martin & Janice**, his grandson **Marcus Joaquin**, his parents **Felix & Florentina** (†), brother **Jimmy Brown**, relatives and friends request the readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

Cremation will be on Friday, March 11, 2005, 4:00 p.m. at the Loyola Memorial Crematorium, Edsa, Guadalupe after the 2:00 p.m. Mass at Christ the King Chapel C, Green Meadows.

MANUEL C. FABELLA

of Romblon & Novaliches, Caloocan City
Former Teacher (De La Salle, Taft & Greenhills)

Born May 12, 1912, peacefully passed away in the Grace of our Lord on March 9, 2005.

His beloved wife **Atanacia** (†); children **Reynaldo & Cherinidad, Luzviminda, Eliseo & Victoria, Emmanuel & Loreto**; grandchildren, great grandchildren request the readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His body lies in state at Serenity Memorial Chapel, at (Congressional Road), Novaliches, Caloocan City.

Holy Mass will be on Friday, March 11, 2005 at 8:00 p.m. Cremation will be on March 12, 2005, 9:00 a.m.

An obituary with a picture can be a fitting tribute to your departed loved one.

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INQUIRER OBITUARIES

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❷ Any identification document (I.D.)

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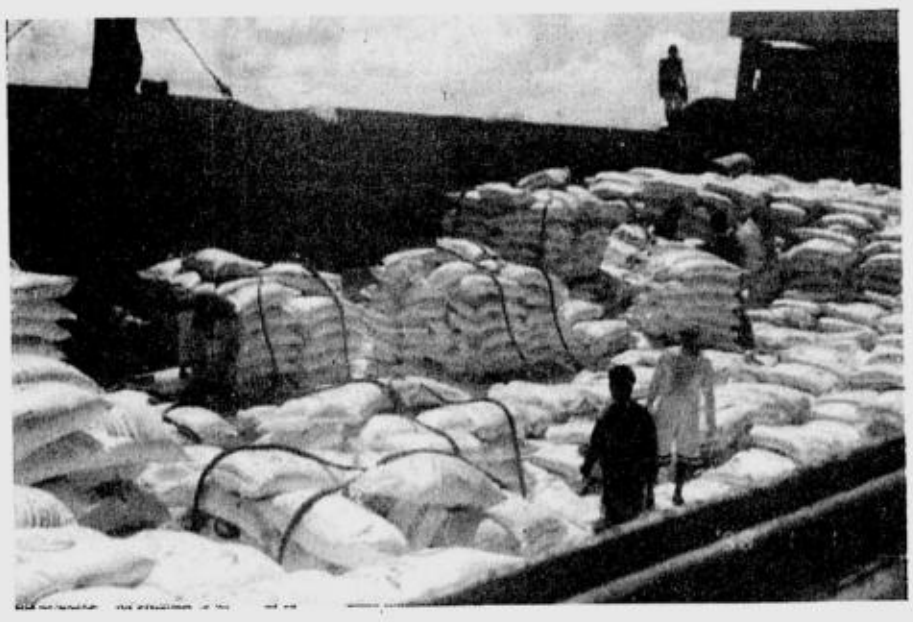

VIETNAM RICE ARRIVES IN LEGAZPI CITY

THE National Food Authority here has started unloading some 120,000 bags of rice imported by the agency from Vietnam. The stocks are part of the 320,000 metric tons the NFA is importing from Vietnam classified as regular milled white rice in 25% broken grains. The stocks will be distributed in Camarines Norte with 20,000 bags; Camarines Sur, 25,000 bags; Catanduanes, 17,000 bags; Masbate, 17,000 bags; Sorsogon, 20,000 bags; and Albay, with 21,000 bags. The stocks will form part of the Bicol region's food security and buffer stocks.

NFA RICE STILL AT CURRENT PRICES

THE NATIONAL Food Authority assured that government rice will continue to be made available at its current price levels through its various accredited outlets nationwide. NFA administrator Gregorio Y. Tan, Jr. said that the food agency still maintains its two-tiered pricing system in the distribution of NFA rice at p16 per kilogram for regular-milled rice (RMR) and P18 per kg for well-milled rice (WMR). Tan explained that the P16-per-kg RMR is available especially in the depressed and remote communities under the NFA's pro-poor programs. On the other hand, the P18-per-kg WMR is rice of upgraded quality available in the agency's other accredited outlets. Tan also said that the NFA remains vigilant in the performance of its mandate of ensuring the country's food security.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

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The **INQUIRER NATIONAL CLASSIFIEDS** in partnership with the **REAL ESTATE BROKERS ASSOCIATION OF THE PHILIPPINES (REBAP)** brings forth **-REBAP Magazine**, a tabloid-sized supplement to be published on March 30, 2005.

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3. Metro Manila Circulation
4. Announcement of the supplement to be released in the Classifieds Section
5. Free copies of the REBAP Magazine to be distributed on March 30 during REBAP's 1st General Membership meeting
6. Insert on Inquirer's March 30, 2005 issue.

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INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

Ad No. 2005-004

PD Ref No.: PB050216-RM0012/PR No.: SD-05-009208

The **NATIONAL TRANSMISSION CORPORATION, BIDS AND AWARD COMMITTEE (TRANSCO-BAC) FOR HEAD OFFICE**, wishes to invite interested parties to apply for eligibility and to bid on the items listed below:

Quantity	Item Description	PR No.	Approved Budget
One (1) Lot	Supply and Delivery of 60 units Caliber 40 Firearm	SD-05-009208	P3,000,000.00

1. The Bidding Documents will be available for issuance starting **March 4, 2005 to April 5, 2005** from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the BAC Secretariat Office, National Transmission Corporation, Materials Management Division (MMD), Ground Floor, TransCo Main Bldg., Power Center, Quezon Avenue corner BIR Road, Diliman, Quezon City upon payment of non-refundable fee of **One Thousand Pesos (P1,000.00)** per set.
2. Deadline for submission, receipt and opening of bids shall be on or before **10:00 a.m. of April 6, 2005** at the Admin Conference Room, Ground Floor, TransCo Main Bldg., Power Center, Quezon Avenue corner BIR Road, Diliman, Quezon City. If the date is declared non-working day, the deadline for submission shall be rescheduled on a later date that will be announced through a bid bulletin. Submission of documents must be clear, legible and readable. Late submission and/or incomplete bid documents shall not be accepted.
3. Pre-bid conference will be held on **March 17, 2005 at 2:00 p.m.** at the Admin Conference Room, Ground Floor, TransCo Main Bldg., Power Center, Quezon Avenue corner BIR Road, Diliman, Quezon City.
4. All particulars relative to the eligibility, bidding, evaluation of bids and award of contract shall be governed by the Implementing Rules and Regulations-A of Republic Act 9184.
5. TransCo reserves the right to reject any Application for Eligibility or all bids without offering any reasons, waive any required formality therein, and to make an award to the bidder whose proposal is most advantageous to the government.
6. Additional information shall be furnished upon request. All communications should be addressed to the undersigned at the aforementioned address.

(Sgd.) **ANTONIO G. LABAYANI**
Chairman, Bids and Award Committee

(PDI - March 4 & 10, 2005)

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PUBLIC NOTICES

ANNOUNCEMENT

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT THE ESTATE OF THE LATE JUANITO P. ENCINARES WAS EXTRAJUDICIALLY SETTLED AMONG HIS HEIRS AS PER DOC. NO. 356; PAGE NO. 73; BOOK NO. 81; SERIES OF 2005 UNDER NOTARY PUBLIC ATTY. PATRICIO L. BONCAYAO JR. (PDI MAR.10,17, 24, 2005)

ANNOUNCEMENT

Notice is hereby given that the lease purchase agreement of Mr. ALBINO D. RODRIGUEZ of Block 6 Lot 5 Bonanza Phase IV Homeowners Dwellers Association, Inc is hereby terminated.

The notice is in compliance with the rules & regulations of National Home Mortgage Finance Corporation.

(PDI - March 10, 2005)

PUBLIC NOTICES

NOTICE OF LOSS

Notice is hereby given for the loss of one booklet of ORIGINAL RECEIPTS last December 18, 2004 with series no. 11009 to 11050 owned by QUALITY CIRCUITS SERVICES, INC.
Note: The above receipts are not consumed.

Notice is hereby given that stock Cert. No. 13534 issued by Union Cement Corp. for 14,599 shares of Mr. Cesar G. Saldana has been reported lost. If no contest received new cert. will be issued.
(PDI-March 10, 17, 24, 2005)

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People, Events & Products

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Editor Aries Espinosa

Enchanted Kingdom exhibit to kick-off 10th year celebration

A DECADE ago, a spell was cast on the peaceful town of Sta. Rosa. There rose Enchanted Kingdom, a place of fun and enchantment, where the young and young at heart gather to build magical memories.

Since the day it opened, more than 55 million smiles and happy memories have been created from its visitors. It is thus only befitting that a year-long celebration be set for the country's only world-class theme park.

To start this celebration, an exhibit, entitled "Enchanted Kingdom: A Decade of Magic," will be held at the Shangri-la Mall. The exhibit will feature how the magic began in 1992, when Enchanted Kingdom president Mario O. Mamon and colleagues started dreaming of a place where people, adults and children alike, could come and have both fun and memorable experiences in a wholesome environment.

The exhibit tells guests the story of how this inspiration turned into reality when the theme park opened its gates in 1995, lending delight to thousands of Filipinos who have since appreciated this meticulously designed theme park, with seven themed zones, each offering different rides and attractions.

More spells were conjured at the theme park, with the opening of new rides and other attractions. These include the opening of Rio Grande in 2001, Xtreme Paintball in 2002, Kart Trak in 2003 and 4D Discovery Theater in 2003.

The exhibit will then acquaint guests to what are in store at Enchanted Kingdom in the future.

An inter-active experience awaits guests also, with the exhibit's exciting treats including an array of trivia display and photos of celebrities who have taken part in the excitement and revelry on momentous occasions at the park.

The story of Enchanted Kingdom will not be complete without providing focus on its efforts to lend cheers to the needy and underprivileged in collaboration with charitable organizations.

And just like any day at Enchanted Kingdom, the exhibit is completed by surprise appearances from favorite park characters and mascots led by the Wizard.

According to Mario Mamon, president of Enchanted Kingdom, this event is a way of thanking the Lord and the people who have made what Enchanted Kingdom is today. "This is a way for us thank Him, the employees and everybody who have been part of the project. The celebration is not just being held to attract people to the park and see how it has changed. It is also to recognize those who are still contributing to our growth.

The exhibit will be held at the level 1 exhibit area of Shangri-la Plaza Mall in Mandaluyong City, from March 10 to 13.

Enchanted Kingdom is located at the new component City of Santa Rosa, Laguna, only 30 kilometers south of Makati. For bookings and other information, visit Enchanted Kingdom, Inc. at G/F Tropical Palms Condominium, 103 dela Rosa St., Legaspi Village, Makati City. Call 830-2111 to 17 or email www.enchantedkingdom.com.ph

TRUE VALUE SUPPORTS DREAM PADDLE PROJECT OF HANDS ON MANILA

True Value Home Center has partnered with Hands On Manila Foundation Inc to sponsor the Dream Paddle Project of Pangarap Shelter, a home for streetboys. The Dream Paddle Project was conceptualized by the San Beda Dragonboat Rowing Team as an income-generating project for the older boys of Pangarap Shelter. Under the supervision of the San Beda team, the boys will make and sell the paddles to different dragonboat teams for their practice sessions and competitions. A special set of paddles will also be made into artworks to depict the dreams and ambitions of the boys to encourage and inspire them to pursue their dreams. True Value donated the first batch of paint for the paddles last March 1. Shown in the picture are: (standing from left): Ed Lorenzo, Pangarap Shelter teacher, a resident of Pangarap Shelter; Gilbert Chan, coordinator of San Beda Rowing Team; Bro. Francis Tanega, Pangarap Shelter executive director; Lani Castaneda, True Value marketing manager, and Dondon Marquez, program director of Hands On Manila. Second row and those sitting are some of the boys of Pangarap Shelter.

PMAM CONDUCTS MEDICAL MISSION

Worthwhile causes are almost always concluded with positive appraisals. The doctors, nurses and auxiliaries of the Philippine Medical Association of Michigan got their share of these when they capped off their 4-day medical mission last Jan. 27 at the Wonder Island Resort. This noble endeavor was made possible through the praiseworthy efforts of the Pua family of Calamba City, Laguna and the Philippine Medical Association of Michigan (PMAM). It rendered out-patient and surgical services. The former was conducted at the Palingon Gym while the latter took place at the Calamba Doctors Hospital and JP Rizal District Hospital. Close to 4,000 patients received medical assistance, around 150 of which were surgical cases.

GMA-7 launches Mobile Kusina

DISCOVER distinct flavors, meet interesting people and visit the most captivating places in the Philippines, all in a wonderful journey with GMA-7's fresh, innovative and creative home kitchen on the road - the Mobile Kusina.

Hosted by the vibrant Christine Jacob-Sandejas, Mobile Kusina (MK) is a 30-minute fusion of culinary, travelogue, documentary and talk every Friday mornings that makes the program really something to look forward to.

A first on Philippine television, Mobile Kusina is produced by GMA-7 together with San Miguel Corp that aims to go beyond the usual home-kitchen set up.

Another original show from GMA-7, Mobile Kusina is more than just a cooking demo show. With its well-equipped kitchen, Mobile Kusina is always on the go and ready to bring rare culinary adventures and experiences to many viewers.

The show will leave the viewers thrilled as Christine and the new Mobile Kusina bring the viewers closer to where good food is, meanwhile the mind is kept full with the picturesque scenes and the nuggets of information about the places that will be explored.

Mobile Kusina is set to share authentic Filipino cuisines with a little twist on the recipes at times as well as discover new flavors and sumptuous dishes to satisfy the ever-changing appetite of the Filipino viewer.

Mobile Kusina is good news not only for those who love food but also for those who have the passion for traveling, undoubtedly keeping adventure-seekers at-pace with the hottest scenic spots in and out of the metropolis.

With her new kitchen, Christine winds her way from North to South... East to West... visiting cities, provinces and even the remote barangays and barrios to bring the Mobile Kusina closer to all Filipinos. And with Christine's bubbly, attractive and candid personality, the show will surely enliven Friday mornings of many televiewers.

For those who love sheer fun, Mobile Kusina also guarantees the viewers creative, juicy and fun segments, punctuated by appearances of guest celebrities. The show further spells chance and luck for the viewers, via SMS interaction, because each episode offers new promo gimmicks.

Join Christine as she takes her unique kitchen to the hottest destinations in town with her hottest recipes on-hand only on Mobile Kusina which started last Feb. 25. Mobile Kusina airs at 10 a.m. before SIS.

VERSAILLES HOLDS GROUNDBREAKING CEREMONY

Located along the 30-meter wide Daang Hari Road, Las Piñas City, Versailles is just a hop and skip away from Alabang Town Center, Asian Hospital, the business centers of Alabang. Versailles boast of its huge clubhouse with complete amenities to be nestled on a 2.8 -hectare nature park, strategically positioned on the 78-hectare subdivision development where all utilities are laid underground. So designed as a European Mediterranean style community - Versailles, will let you experience a life in a charmingly blissful community. Versailles recently held its groundbreaking ceremony last March 6. Shown in photo making that initial step towards this ambitious venture are Wiliam Go, vice chair of Chinatrust; Chung Tiong Tay, chair of the Philippine Bank of Communications; Vicente Lim, president of Royal Oil Products Inc; Ret. Maj. Gen. Jose Magno Jr., chair, Citra Metro Manila Tollways; Dr. Washington Z. Sycip, founder of SGV & Co; Allen C. Roxas, president of State Properties Corp (SPC), Andreas Rubin, president of Steag State Power Inc; Bishop Ephraim Tendero, national director Phil. Council of Evangelical Churches; Augusto C. Lopez-Dee, EVP of State Investment Trust Inc; Justice Jesus Elbiñas, former presiding Judge Court of Appeals; Bernardino Ramos, Partner SGV & Co and Manuel Torres, EVP of State Properties Corp.

Bits & Clips

Hotel Sogo celebrates 12th year

HOTEL Sogo celebrates its 12th year of consistent leadership in the walk-in industry with an astonishing 16-branch network and unparalleled image of being the "PinakaMalinis", "PinakaMagalang" and "Laging Bago". Proof of its continuous success is its expansion to another lodging business with the launch of the 1st Hotel Sogo Drive-In this year. The 1st Hotel Sogo Drive-In will rise at the heart of Pasay near Edsa-Harrison. Sogo's 1st Drive-In branch will command stiff competition in the league as it proves to give guests the privacy, comfort, cleanliness and service, which are truly Sogo.

Seminar at Mepco

MATSUSHITA Electric Phils Corp (Mepco), an industry leader in home appliance manufacturing through the Panasonic Regional Training Center (Singapore) will hold a two-day "Creative Problem Solving Seminar" on March 11 to 12, at its training center in Taytay, Rizal. Tapped to conduct the program is Reandy Yang of the Panasonic Regional Training Center Singapore. This seminar is open to the supervisors, managers and key officers of Mepco, its dealers, as well as other individuals who seek to improve their cretive problem solving skills. For inquiries, contact engineer Angelo P. Tamayo or Barbs T. Fernandez at 284-2293 or 635-2260 loc. 2821-22.

UN OFFICIALS RECEIVE CITATION

Dr. Peter Piot (second from right), Executive Director for the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and concurrent United Nations (UN) Undersecretary-General, was accorded a Congressional Medal of Achievement by the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Jose de Venecia, for his leadership worldwide to subdue the unique global threat of HIV/AIDS. UNAIDS, the organization he leads, was also a recipient of a Congressional Medal. Deborah Landey (second from left), UN Resident Coordinator for the Philippines, also received a Congressional Medal of Achievement in recognition of her untiring efforts to promote and enhance friendly and fraternal relations between the House of Representatives and the UN in advancing implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) especially in the struggle against poverty, ignorance, and disease and protection of the environment, and for her supportive role of the Philippine Government's determination to prevent the spread of AIDS in the country. Others in the photo are Joy Landey (left) and HIV/AIDS Ambassador Lennart Hjelmåker (partly hidden) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sweden.

ProductFILES

Menuto: Magic meals in a box

MENUTO meals are exact portions all the time. When Menuto is included in the daily meal plan at least once a day, assigned cooks can multi-task, having only to cook twice a day for example, instead of three, leaving enough time to do other things in the house. It's a handy household helper, that can be used for merienda or baon for office and school. It is so easy to use - just slip off the carton sleeve, pierce a small hole or two on the plastic sealing film and microwave for 3 minutes. Menuto easy to eat complete meals are available in all Shopwise supermarkets, Robinsons Big R, Robinsons Supermarket, Tropical Foodmart, 100, Ever Supermarkets, Microtel Hotels, Total Boutique, Petron Treats and Caltex Starmart. It will also be available in SM Supermarkets, Unimart and in all Superferry passenger ships. For inquiries call 926-3259 and look for Mia Gonzales for details.

Getting ahead this summer at Informatics

KIDS are never too young to start learning new things like concepts behind Information Technology. IT is everywhere since electronic based programs are now used in almost all sectors of society like corporate offices, schools, business establishments, homes and entertainment. Today, it's common for kids as young as 3 years old to start tinkering with the computer, be it a game or an educational exercise. Early and constant exposure has made it easier to teach IT topics to a younger audience. There is a lot of IT courses available. For a different summer workshop, try enrolling kids to interesting and fun computer classes. Informatics, a multinational corporation committed to provide quality lifelong learning services to the community, offers classes for kids and teenagers (ages 9 to 18). Summer courses include Fun Animation using Flash, Digital Photography or Windows Movie Maker where each course will run for 6 days (12 hrs). The summer sessions will conclude with an IT competition and an Exhibition that will feature all students who enrolled in the Summer Workshop. For instance, a three-hour on-the-spot competition will be done at the end of their last session where their animated products are judged on creativity, concept, design and use of flash features. Winners from each Informatics branch will then compete in the final round during the culminating event. During the final round, each contestant will be given one and a half hours to enhance further his or her animation entry. To know more about Informatics' Summer Workshops, you may contact inquiry@informatics.com.ph or visit any Informatics Center near you.

THE HOTTEST BAND IN THE CHARTS

Dimsum band, the hottest band in the bar circuit, is now also the hottest band in the charts. The song 'TY4URLUV', the carrier single of the group's self-titled album, is now the no. 1 most requested song in most Metro Manila radio stations. The album was written and produced by the band's manager and Hotdog honcho Dennis Garcia, and released by GMA Records. Dimsum performs regularly on Thursdays at The Peninsula's Conservatory, Fridays at Strumms Jupiter and Saturdays at Red Door Bar.

"Unplug! This cable is now obsolete."

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Here It Is!

Step into Freedom

I'm standing by my car, ready to go home. That was a real great golf game with some work thrown in even on the course (checking email, "google-ing" some important business items) on my laptop with that great new wireless gizmo. But enough testing already, enough hearing all the pundits heap praise on just about the biggest New Thing in Philippine business. And although I've seen the power of PLDT WeRoam in liberating an otherwise desk-locked worker population firsthand, I still can't wait to grab a glimpse of this killer app's (or is it killer tech?) wider implications. To say it will vastly change the face of business operations across the country is probably a safe blanket statement, but hardly the whole picture.

I'm not alone in agreeing with observers, some of them friends from tech centers like Silicon Valley that really, the revolution isn't just in the hardware. This is without saying the hardware is already considerable because it is. PLDT WeRoam will give a networked labor force true 24/7 Internet mobility. As simple as that and nearly overnight, you and your colleagues are freed from the "non-productive" ordeals of waiting in line, in traffic, in choking red tape.

What we are looking at is what lies above and beyond the horizon, the business and social ripples that are going to be felt far and wide. Some will be subtle phased changes, others as gentle as a tsunami. This is one boat then, anyone serious about the competition can afford to miss.

There will only be one way to be sure, to see and hear the forecast ahead. And that's why the launch of PLDT WeRoam today, March 10, Thursday at the Shangri-la Makati will be the precious heads-up for chiefs and managers looking to cut costs and boost efficiency in such dramatic ways. And to think it all started on a simple premise.

That premise was to link field operatives (Salesmen, Account Managers and all) on the corporate LAN or Internet. Such a much-awaited enabling will result in the seismic shift that enthusiasts of PLDT WeRoam foresee.

I've talked to them. I've seen the excited and animated looks on their faces. Staff, managers and CEOs who have tested PLDT WeRoam move about with a renewed vigor and hustle. It's time to see for yourself what this hoopla is all about; and come prepared for the future. It has arrived.

■ Walter Ray Choi

Meeting a deadline from the skyline.

LIFESTYLE

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Editor **Chelo Banal-Formoso**

Jakarta's pride now in Manila

Queens can easily pass for a smaller version of a modern, no-frills hotel café

FISH Tava

Text by Alex Y. Vergara
Photos by Joseph Agcaoili

SINCE Queens Crystal Garden (Jupiter Street in Makati) opened for business in January, first-time customers have been mistaking it for another Chinese restaurant.

But a number of well-traveled Filipinos, especially those who frequent Jakarta, know that the restaurant chain has a reputation for serving good Indian and Asian fusion dishes inspired by Chinese, Indonesian and Singaporean cuisine.

"I guess the restaurant's name and its modern interiors give first-time customers a totally different impression," says Rubina Ram, Queens' operations manager. "After they look at the menu and realize what's in store for them, they're too embarrassed to back out. They have no choice but to try the food."

But it seems customers, reluctant or otherwise, have very little reason to regret their decision to stay and sample the dishes. Ever since Ram, 21, and best friend Karina Mahbubani, 22, Queens' assistant operations manager, rolled up their sleeves and buckled down to work late last year, the two young women haven't had a day off.

Queens, which can easily seat 110 people (a loft with a bar and flat television is available for private parties), is usually packed with customers, mostly Filipinos, for both lunch and dinner, says Ram.

80 vegetarian items

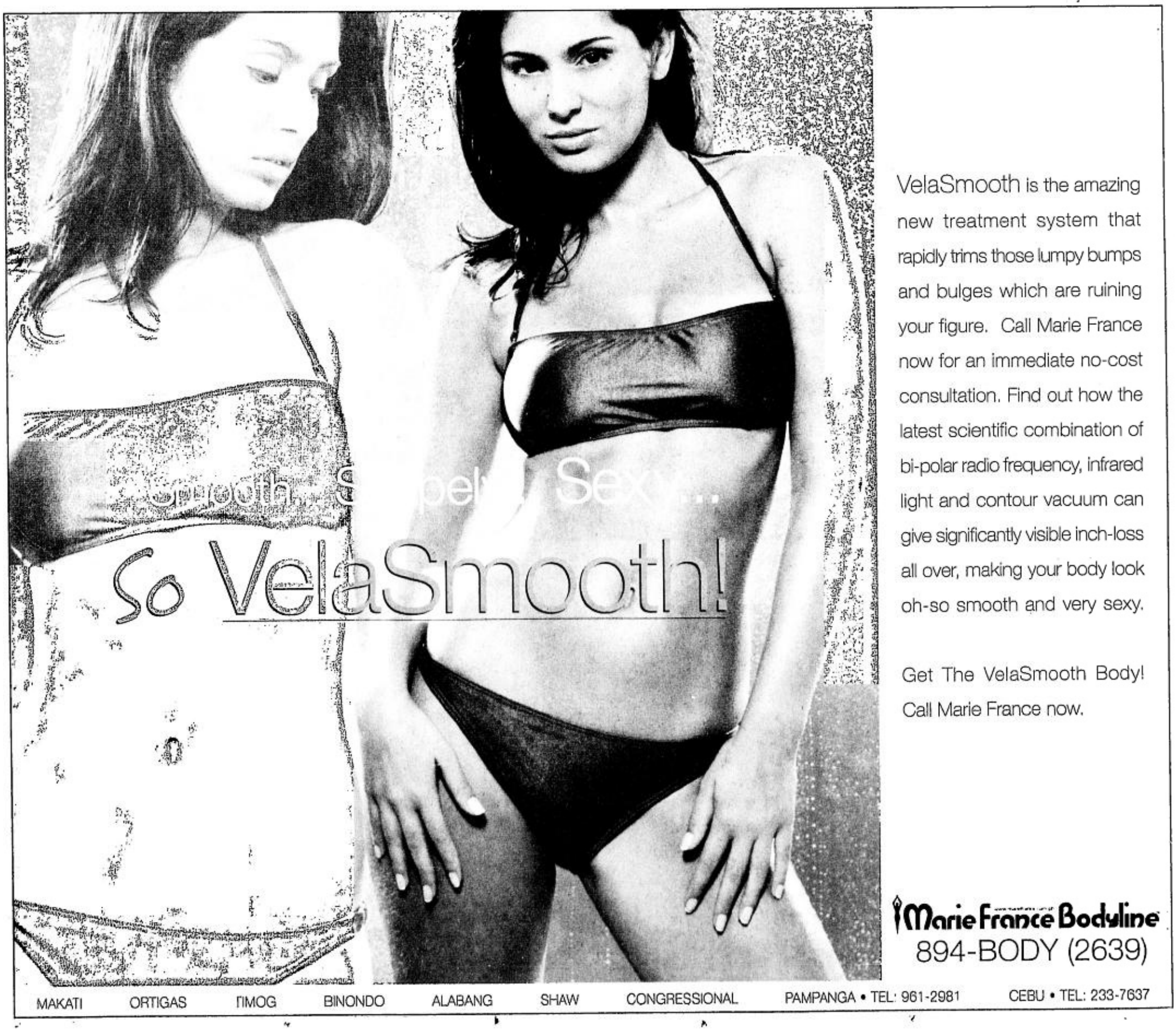
Diners can't seem to have enough of the restaurant's 200 offerings, including 80 vegetarian dishes.

"Our vegetarian dishes are cooked properly," says Ram, herself a semi-vegetarian. "We don't cheat. What you see is what you get."

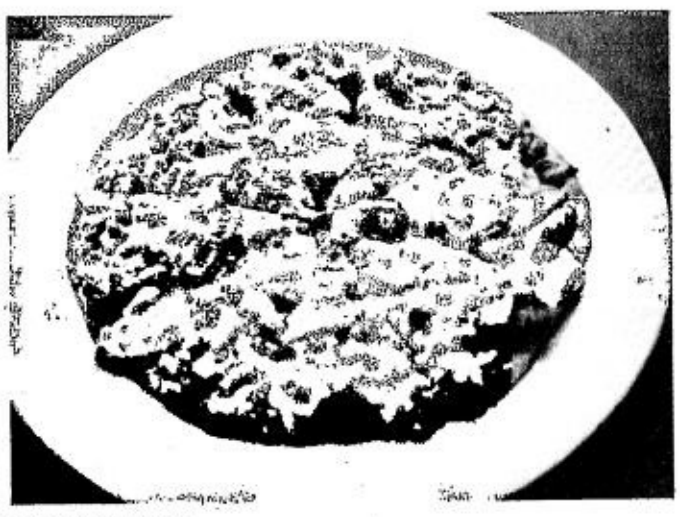
Every vegetarian dish is cooked separately from meat dishes and is free of animal meat and fat. Two of the most salable veggie specialties are Mock Duck Szechuan (P240 per order) and Nasi Goreng Buddhist (P200).

The former smells, tastes and even looks vaguely like a duck

JAKARTA'S/ C2



MOCK Duck Szechuan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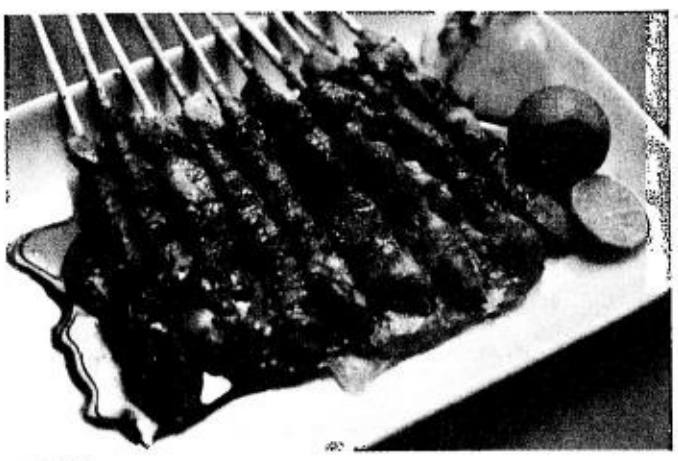
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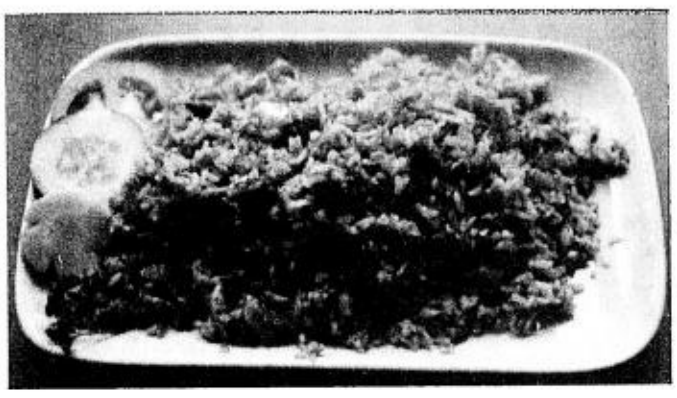

NASI Goreng

MUTTON Curry

Jakarta's pride now in Manila

From page C1

but is, in fact, actually strips of dark brown veggie meat cooked in Szechuan sauce flavored with such spices as leeks, onions, garlic and dried chili.

Nasi Goreng Buddhist is every bit like the more famous Nasi Goreng Ayam (chicken fried rice) and Nasi Goreng Seafood, except that it's darker because of the barbecue sauce and doesn't have animal meat. In place of chicken and seafood, the rice dish derives its flavor from the vegetarian equivalent of crab, shrimp and ham.

No beef and pork

Though not completely meatless, don't expect beef and pork dishes in this restaurant. The Rams are devout Hindus, while the three Indonesian chefs are Muslims. For meat-loving Filipinos, Queens offers an extensive list of savory chicken, mutton and seafood dishes.

The restaurant's Singaporean chili crabs, says Ram, taste as good as those in Singapore. And she hastens to debunk misconceptions that all Indian dishes are loaded with fiery spices.

"I have a low tolerance for spices myself," says Ram, who took up hotel and restaurant management with Mahbubani in Australia. "If a dish is a bit spicy we tell our diners and we adjust it to suit their taste."

The Chicken Tandoori (P360) consists of pieces of chicken marinated overnight in yogurt and freshly ground spices, and grilled to perfection in the *tandoor* (traditional Indian oven). The dish is best eaten with the Papadum Masala (P105), thinly sliced and freshly baked Indian bread sprinkled with flavorful *masala*.

The Satay Ayam (P260 per 10 pieces) is Indonesia's version of the chicken barbecue. Instead of chunky meat, tiny bits of deboned chicken are skewered, roasted and garnished with peanut sauce.

If mutton is your pleasure, then the Mutton Curry (P290), tender pieces of lamb meat cooked in curry sauce with cream and butter, is a must-try. In fact, the restaurant offers more than half-a-dozen lamb specialties.

The bounties of the sea are used in such dishes as the Fish Curry, Fish Mahkanwala and Fish Tava, as well as the Prawn Tikka Masala, Prawn Kali Mirch Masala and Prawn Hydrabadi.

Dream come true

All fish dishes cost P315 per order, while prawn dishes, with the exception of Prawn Tava (P550), cost P325 each.

For dessert, the Kulfi (P90) or Indian ice cream and the Cassata (P100), layers of ice cream shaped like a slice of cake and glazed with fruits, are ideal ways to cap a hearty lunch or dinner. Oreo Cappuccino (P125), ice-cold coffee shake mixed with Oreo cookies and ice cream, is a thirst-quenching beverage and dessert rolled into one.

Ram, a Philippine-born Indian, and her family have always dreamt of managing their own restaurant. The Rams became fans of Queens during their frequent visits to Jakarta. The Ram matriarch is from Jakarta.

Since the Jakarta restaurant's owners are family friends, they allowed the Rams to use the name Queens.

Aside from the family's love for good food, Ram's father, a businessman who's been based in Manila for 35 years now, also helped put up the restaurant partly to lure back his daughter. Ram's two siblings are currently based in Australia.

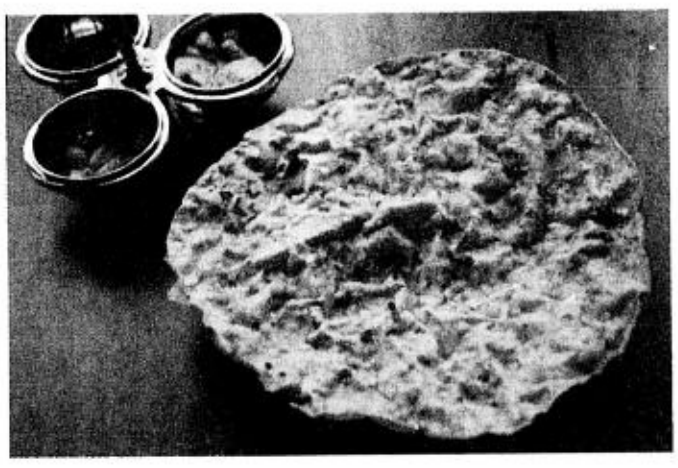
"I also worked for several restaurants in Australia for three years to gain hands-on experience," says Ram. "I couldn't see myself going back to the Philippines and working for somebody else. It was either I stayed in Australia or managed my own restaurant here. Despite the long hours we put in, I'm very happy to be part of this venture."

Queens is shaping up as a family affair. The patriarch is partly in charge of promoting the restaurant to friends and associates, while his wife, a part-time interior designer, helped their daughter redo the interiors.

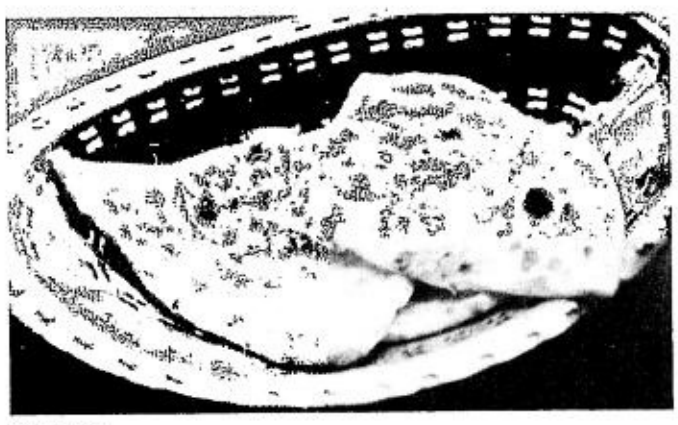
Except for a few paintings of Hindu gods (no ornate lamps, rich throw pillows and carved doors), the place could easily pass for a smaller version of a modern, no-frills hotel café.

That a growing number of Filipinos are making this Indian family's dream a reality is proof that people are now more open to savor and experience the scents and flavors of food beyond what were once deemed familiar.

E-mail the author at avergara@inquirer.com.ph


PAPADUM Masala

CASSATA ice cream


SAMOSA

SMALLER version of a contemporary, no-frills hotel café

HANDS-ON managers and best friends Rubina Ram and Karina Mahbubani

TASTEMAKERS

RESTAURANT OPENING

Burgoo has new branches in Promenade Greenhills, San Juan; and Gateway Mall, Araneta Center. The new branches offer favorite Burgoo appetizers, salads, soups, pizzas, pastas, seafood and meat dishes and desserts. Burgoo at the Promenade was blessed by Fr. Jayjay, present were Burgoo's board of directors Monnette Salapantan, Maritoni Raymundo, Ma. Teresa Rodriguez, Dennis Voboril from US Department of Agriculture, Sen. Pia Cayetano, Mauro Malang, Burgoo's managing director Albert Alavera, Burgoo's board of directors Vivencio Rodriguez, Matthew Rodriguez and Martin Rodriguez, with the country's beauty queens.

RED CROSS DONATION

Shakey's answers the call to help the needy by donating to the Philippine National Red Cross (PNRC) Relief Operations. Receiving the donations are PNRC director for fund generation Gwendolyn Pang and PNRC secretary general Victor Liozo Jr. Representing Shakey's are Mariella de Leon (third from left), Shakey's manager for local store marketing; and Anabel C. Roxas (right), personnel and administration manager. Call 5338000 for delivery.

DIFFERENT FLAVORS

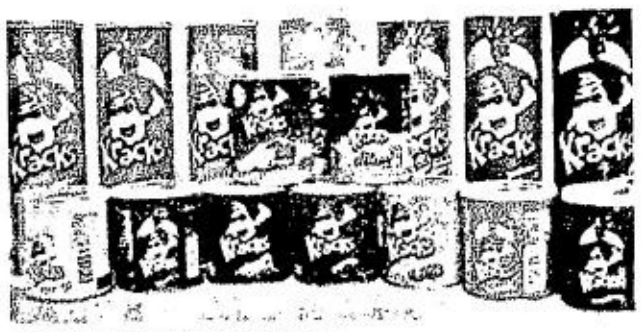
For that pleasurable peanut butter experience, try Peter Pan Peanut Butter. Smooth and creamy, Peter Pan Peanut Butter has several variants to choose from—Creamy Peanut Butter, Crunchy Peanut Butter and Smart Choice Reduced Fat in Creamy and Crunchy variants. Grab a jar of Peter Pan Peanut Butter at leading supermarkets nationwide.

FREE SPAGHETTI SAUCE

Tefal has developed a wide array of easy-to-use, low-maintenance and long-lasting cookware, bakeware, small appliances and kitchen tools and gadgets to meet every cooking requirement. Every purchase of Tefal cookware and small appliances comes with a free Clara Olé Italian-style Spaghetti Sauce until supply lasts. Tefal is exclusively distributed by Rustan Marketing Corp. Call 8909703.

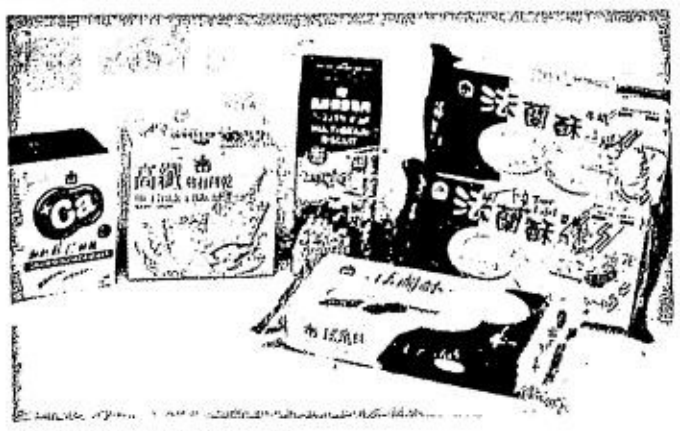
REFRESHING OOLONG TEA

Pokka, a leading brand in beverages, has packed the goodness of oolong tea into its refreshing Oolong Tea drink. Pokka Oolong Tea has no sugar and no calories, suitable for health-conscious individuals. Pokka Oolong Tea is exclusively distributed by Benby Enterprises and is available in leading supermarkets nationwide.



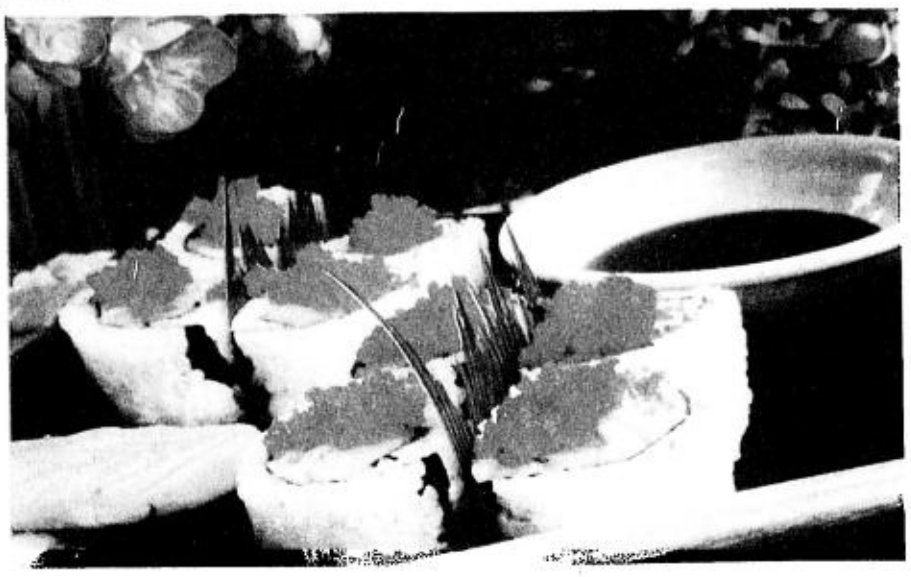
CRISPY, HEALTHY SNACK

Kracks is a light, crispy and healthy snack that comes in seven flavors: Original, Cheese, Cream and Sour, Barbecue, Seafood, Tomato and Paprika. It is available in 50- and 180-g canisters. Kracks is available at all SM Snack Exchange outlets, Watson's and leading supermarkets. All Kracks products are exclusively distributed in the Philippines by Megane Trading. Call 7117675 or fax 7430858.

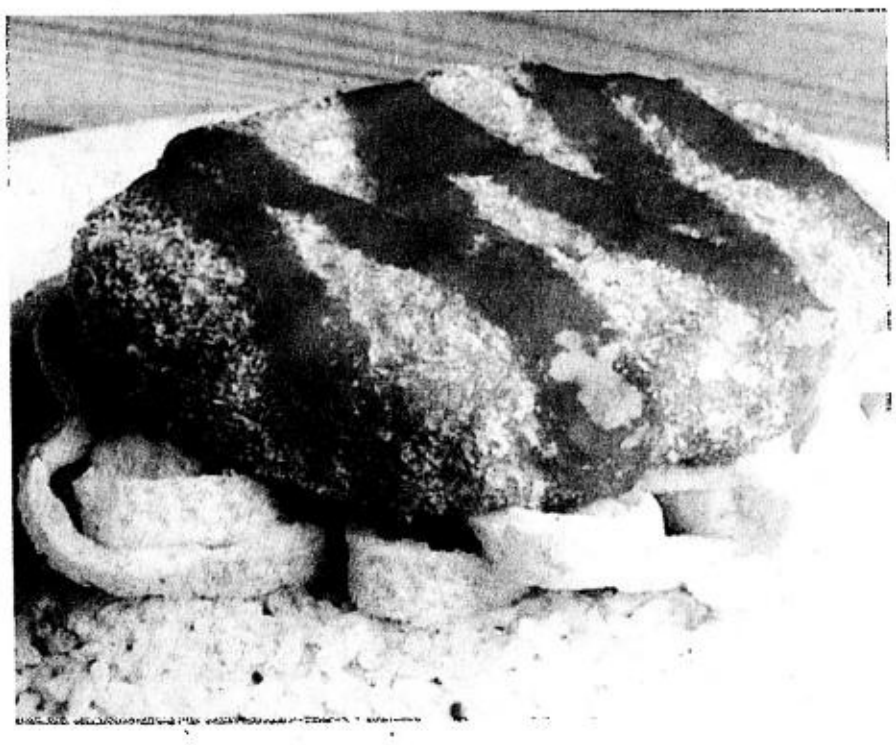


NEW BISCUIT BRAND

One of the leading international brands in chocolates and biscuits is now in the Philippines. I-Mei brings to the country its line of chocolates, crackers and biscuits. I-Mei products are available at SM Snack Exchange outlets, Watson's, Ministop and leading supermarkets. Call 7117675 or fax 7430858.



SUSHI-YA'S California Maki



SPAMJAM presents Rice Meal Combos. Rice Combo 1 has sweetened Spam luncheon meat with sunny-side-up egg and garlic rice. Rice Combo 2 has breaded Spam luncheon meat with scrambled egg and garlic rice. Each order comes with 12-oz iced tea and a choice of free sidings: Curly Fries (coated with Cajun), Nuggets (Spam luncheon meat cut into wedges and deep-fried) or Poppers (potato balls with cubed Spam luncheon meat filling). Spamjam is located at Glorietta, Ayala Center and Robinson's Galleria.

Meatless meals

DINING OUT

SUSHI-YA offers meatless meals on Fridays. Enjoy Tofu, Seafood and Tuna Teppanyaki, Teriyaki, Prawn Tempura, Tofu Furai, California Maki, Kani, Sushi-Ya, Sashimi and Sushi-Ya Platter. Sushi-Ya has outlets at Mega Strip B in SM Megamall, Fiesta Strip in SM Pampanga, Robinson's Galleria, Acropolis in Libis and Tomas Morato corner Scout Castor, QC. Call 9279109 or 0927-4330465.

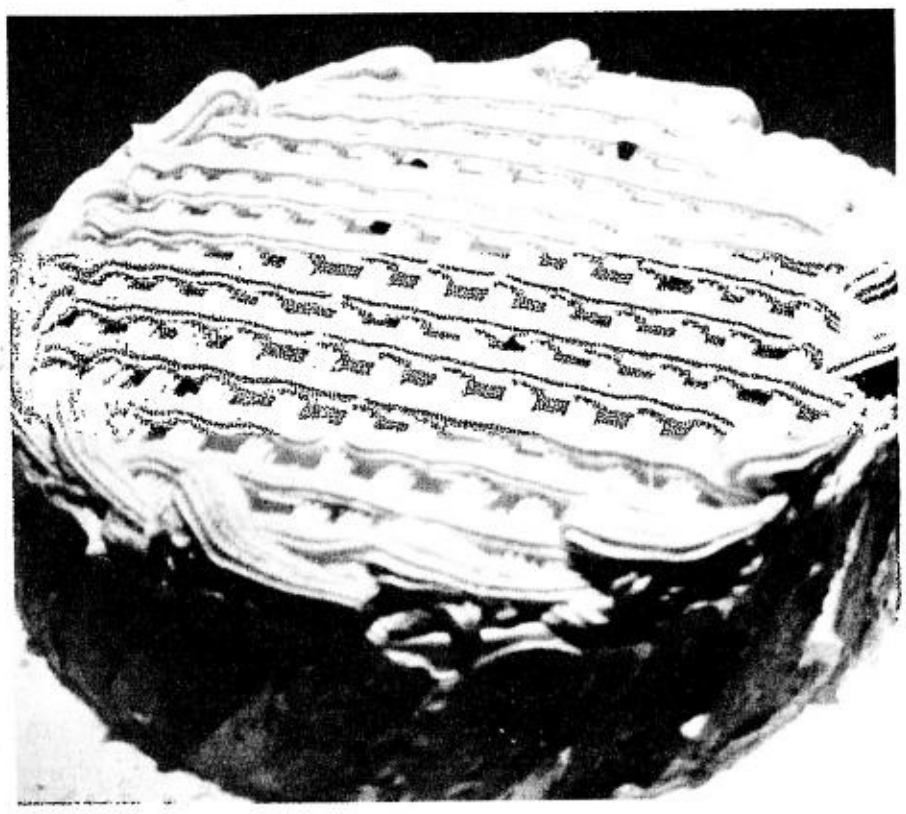
ITALIANNI'S has opened new branches at Scout Rallos corner Tomas Morato Streets and the ground floor of Gateway Mall, Araneta Center. The two new branches feature the same turn-of-the-century decor. Like other Italianni's branch, the new outlets offer pastas, seafood, beef, pork, pizza, salads and more. A new menu item is the "Great Bowls of Pasta." Those who prefer seafood cravings, Italianni's suggests Red Pesto Salmon, an Atlantic salmon grilled and drizzled with basil pesto sauce on a bed of fettuccini pasta in Italianni's own red pesto sauce from oven-dried tomatoes and roasted red bell peppers. Italianni's also has branches at Libis, Glorietta 4, Greenbelt 2, Alabang Town Center, Greenhills and SM City Bicutan.

LE SOUFFLÉ has found a new home at Fernando's at Rockwell Leisure Club in Rockwell Center, Makati. The restaurant offers Grilled Chilean Sea Bass, Baked Rack of Lamb, Alugbati Salad with Arugula, Parmesan Flakes and Crunchy Prosciutto, Pesto a la Jessie with prawns, scallops, salmon, sun-dried tomatoes, asparagus and parmesan flakes, Cheese, Spinach and Mushroom Soufflé, French Chocolate Gateau, Mango Jubilee and Sugar-free Dark Chocolate Mousse. Call 4502993 or 4502995.

EDSA Shangri-La Manila's Garden Café presents Taste of Thailand on March 14-20. To be featured are Chicken with Salted Egg Yolk and Lotus Seed Paste, Shrimp with Lemon Grass and Chili and Snapper with Garlic and Ginger Sauce. At the Lobby Lounge, an Executive Breakfast is offered from 7-10:30 a.m. Call 6338888.

THE COFFEE Bean & Tea Leaf features breakfast treats such as Muesli Parfait, Food for Thought which consists of panini bread, butter, jam and coddled eggs, Eggs Ben, Salmon Scramble, Chicken Sausage and Egg Sandwich, and Muffin Medley. The Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf is located at Greenbelt 3, Ayala Center, Makati; Eastwood City Walk 2, Libis; Bellagio Square, Tomas Morato Ave., QC; Town Plaza, ALabang Town Center; and Gateway Mall, Araneta Center. Call 7576002.

CHINESE Monk casual dining restaurant now delivers dimsum, noodles and other Chinese dishes in Makati and selected Mandaluyong areas for a minimum purchase of P250 worth of food and beverages. For every P500 order, get a free Sweet and Sour Pork or Fish Tofu Hot Pot. Call 8973785 or 8969429.



CAPPUCCINO IN YOUR CAKE
The Sulo Hotel presents Cappuccino Cake this month. Savor the aroma of the bean in butter cream between layers of chocolate cake. This irresistible temptation is available for only P225 at the hotel's Patisserie. Sulo Hotel is located along Matalino Road, Diliman Quezon City. Call 9245051 to 71.

Learn the catering business

THE MAYA Kitchen offers "Catering," 9 a.m-3 p.m., March 11-12, a detailed guide on how to start a catering business.

Learn some basics about running a catering business like legal and technical requirements to get your business started, facilities, personnel, menu including portioning and quantification, cooking and preparation of popular Filipino and international dishes: Vietnamese Beef Noodle Soup, Baked Spring Rolls, Rolled Porkloin Adobo-style, Roast Stuffed Chicken Thighs with Garlic Gravy, Chicken Galantina, Vegetable Samosa, Creamed Spinach Soup, Spicy Wings, Quiche Lorraine, Eggplant Skordalia plus bonus dessert recipes.

Participants also get free copies of the "Food Service" catering cookbook.

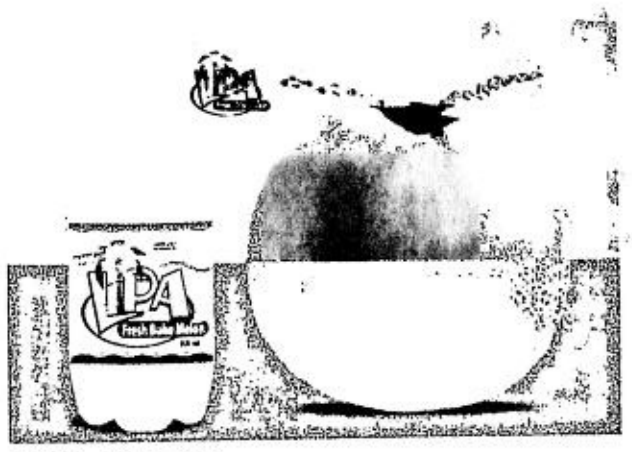
"Easy as Pie," 9 a.m.-1 p.m., March 12, teaches the baking of French Apple Pie, Walnut Pie, Caramel Meringue, Chocolate Chiffon, Banana Cream and Lemon Meringue.

On March 19, 9 a.m.-1 p.m., "Traditional Japanese Recipes" will cover Miso Soup, Tempura, Sukiyaki, Kamameshi and assorted sushi (Kappamaki, Tekamaki, California Maki and Nigiri). Participants get a free Japanese cookbook.

"Food Processing" (ideal for small scale business) will be offered 9 a.m.-1 p.m., March 9-10. It will teach how to make tomato sauce and paste, apple jelly, assorted pickles and *atcharas*, flavored *kropeck*, tamarind *champoy*, ginger tea, chicken ham and *longganisa*, among others.

Interested parties may visit the Maya Kitchen (Tuesdays to Saturdays), 8/L, Liberty Bldg., A. Arnaiz Ave. (formerly Pasay Road), Makati City. Call 8921185 or 8925011 local 108.

E-mail mkitchen@ultimate.info.com.ph



LIPA Fresh Buko Juice

New summer cooler

LIPA Fresh, which introduced the all-natural Lipa Fresh Buko Juice, marks its 10th year with the new Lipa Fresh Buko Melon..

The summer cooler has no preservatives, flavorings or color additives. It is a blend of fresh *buko* and melon.

Buko is rich in Vitamin B1 (Thiamine), and contains some protein. It has a low sodium level. Melon, on the other hand, has Vitamins A and C and *myoinositol*, a lipid that reportedly helps prevent anxiety, insomnia and hardening of the arteries. It has also been found to contain digestive enzymes. Both *buko* and melon contain natural electrolytes, potassium, fiber and calcium.

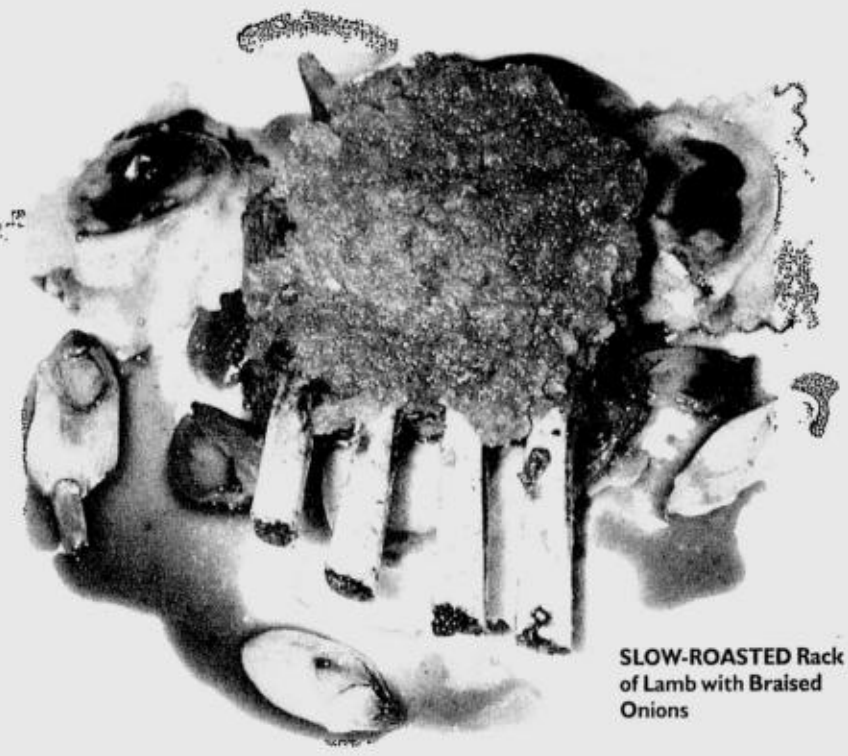
Lipa Fresh Buko Melon goes well with any diet regimen.

Available only until May, get Lipa Fresh Buko Melon at all Pan de Manila outlets, selected restaurants, convenient stores, sports establishments.

Visit www.lipabuko.com

LIFESTYLE

For feedback, e-mail us at lifestyle@inquirer.com.ph
Text us your feedback: inquirer life name/age/city/message to 2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart)



SLOW-ROASTED Rack of Lamb with Braised Onions

Something old is new again, thanks to chef Tobi

KITCHEN RESCUE

Reggie Aspiras

The Pen's Old Manila has a new 25-year-old kitchen whiz who can bring out the many undertones of flavor in every dish

IT WAS last Thursday at the Old Manila where for the first time I met and experienced Tobias Gensheimer, the new man at the helm of the Peninsula's most prestigious restaurant. At 25, this German chef has worked for some of the finest restaurants in the world, including a stint at the Deidesheimer Hof's Michelin star gourmet restaurant Schwarzer Hahn.

In the world of fine food, it is difficult to draw a distinction between the chef and his restaurant. One ultimately becomes the other. It is his food, marked with his own personal stamp, that makes it different and what sets it apart from the rest. Truth of the matter is, Gensheimer's food is a reflection of him; young and fresh, a cross between the classical and the modern, sometimes even bold and experimental.

I find that Tobi's greatest gift is his ability to bring out the many undertones of flavor in a dish. Somehow all ingredients play a major part in his dish composition, each one given its due two seconds of fame to shine as it plays around with your senses, without one overpowering the other. As one flavor ends, the next one begins. There always seems to be a particular taste or a subtle hint, creeping up on your palate.

I started with Lemon Marinated Barramundi with Artichokes and Crispy Red Bream. The dish was straight out clean, in taste and presentation, a merry balance. For a dish so simple, the flavors were extraordinary. The hints of lemon, the twist of *arugula*, the crunch of the artichokes and the texture of the bream... Delightful! The Mushroom Consomme with Pig Trotter Ravioli was up next. Then the Cassoulet of Snails, Morels and Green Garden Peas with Pan-seared Foie Gras, another mouth-watering sensation. The peas lent a sweetness that complimented the Foie Gras to perfection while the woodiness of the morels and the intrinsic flavor and texture of the snails, capped this number off marvelously. Main course consisted of Slow-Roasted Rack of Lamb with Braised Onions and Goat's Cheese Ravioli, and Poached Lapu-lapu Fillet with Lobster Mousse, Potato Tart in Red Wine Butter Sauce. I thought the fish was good but when I tasted the lamb... it was excellent! I haven't had lamb that good in a long time. To finish, Cold Strawberry Champagne Soup with White Chocolate Ice Cream. Champagne, strawberries and chocolate, how could things ever go wrong?! And obviously nothing did! What a lovely interlude it was, indeed!

New things are happening at the Old Manila. While I have Tobi to thank for his gastronomical treasures, I have the Pen's PR man and my *compadre*, Garch to thank, for dining with me and for bringing back such beautiful memories.

TOBIAS Gensheimer, 25, and at the top of his game

Your steak issue is the best! But please complete the menu by giving me a recipe of mashed potatoes and corn. I think most people like eating their steaks with it.

MERLY GAN

This is a basic mashed potato recipe and some variations that can flavor the mashed potatoes as you wish.

½ c butter
1/3 c milk
1/3 c cream
1 k potatoes, boiled, peeled and mashed
salt and pepper to taste
In a pan, melt butter add milk and cream.
Add in potatoes.
Season to taste with salt and pepper. You may add more butter to taste and cream to achieve desired consistency/texture.

Variations

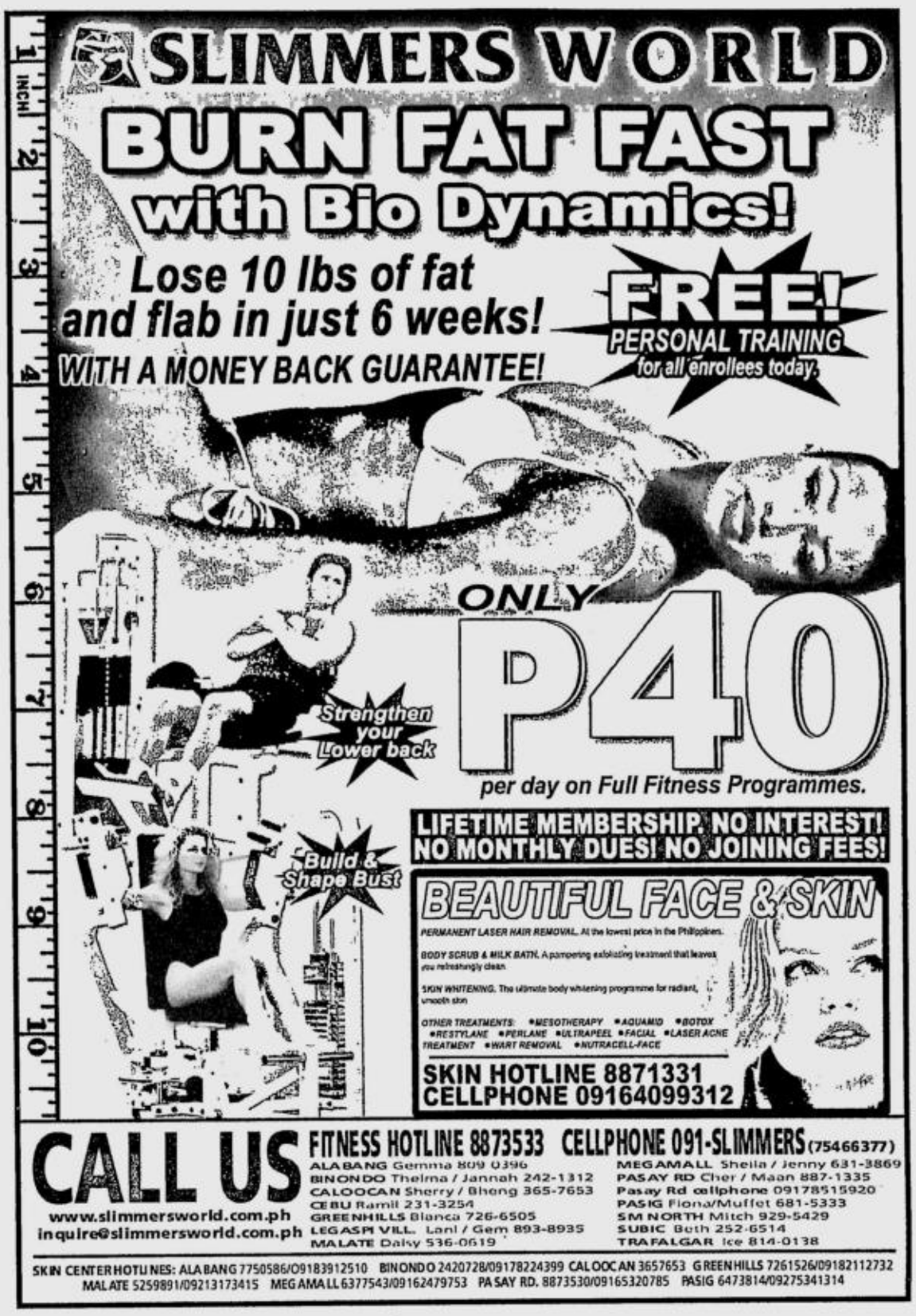
Garlic—Add ½ c chopped garlic and ¼ c parsley to butter. Sauté a few minutes, do not brown. Add milk and cream. Continue with Step 2.

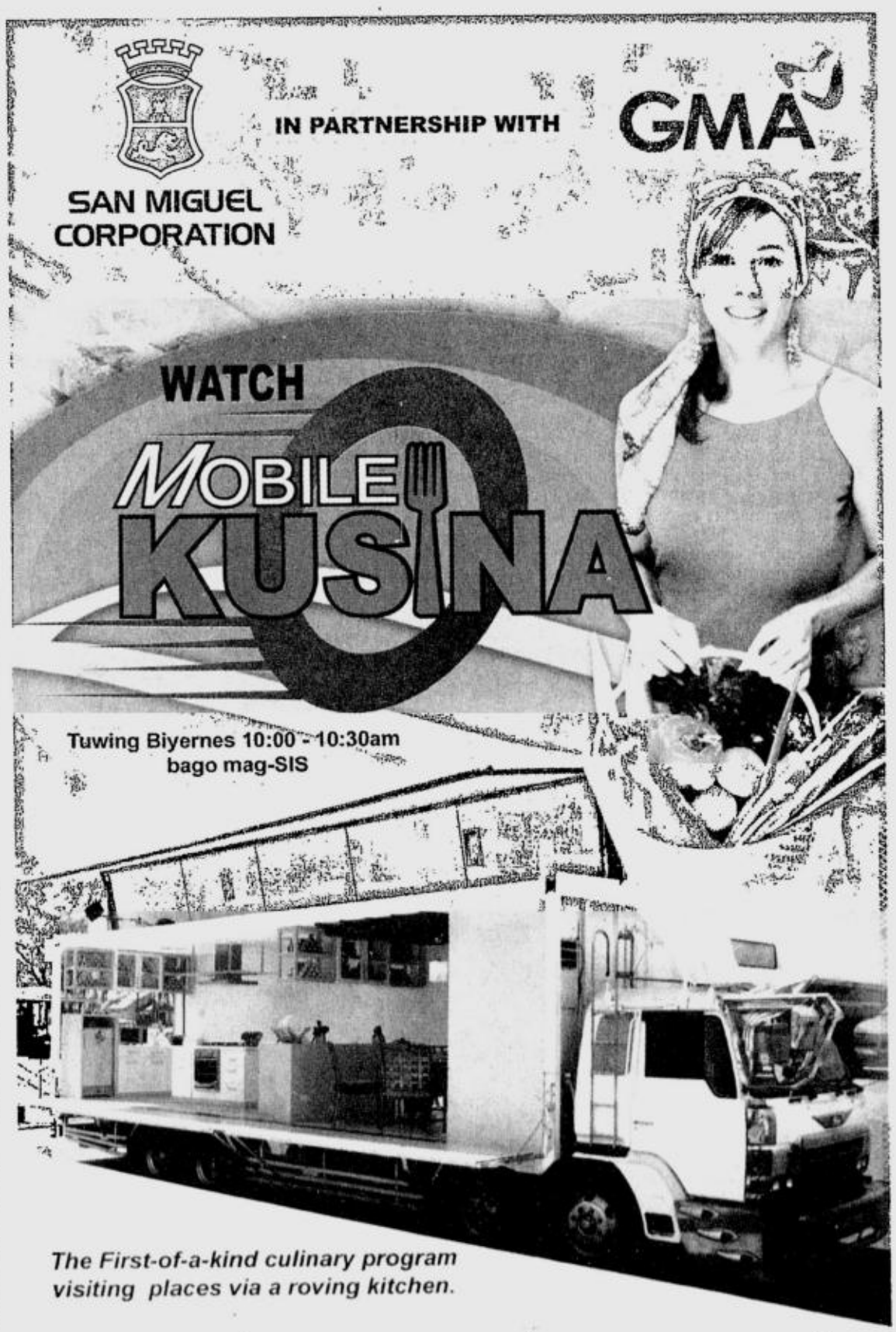
Mushroom Potatoes—Add two tbsp garlic, 1 c mixed fresh mushrooms sliced, ¼ c parsley to butter. Sauté a few minutes, add milk and cream. Continue with Step 2.

Cream Cheese and Bacon—Make basic mashed potato recipe up till Step 3 then add 1/3 to ½ c cream cheese, ½ c cooked bacon, chopped and 1/3 c of chives.

Herb and Garlic—Add ½ c chopped garlic, ¼ c parsley, 1 tsp each of chopped fresh oregano, thyme, rosemary and tarragon to butter. Sauté a few minutes, do not brown

SOMETHING/ D3





OPENING DAY. Rockwell Leisure Club Board of Directors member Oscar Lopez, guests of honor Lorna Laurel and Beth Day Romulo, Le Soufflé vice chair and chef Jessie Sincioco, and Rockwell Leisure Club chair of the board Manolo Lopez

Posh address for French restaurant

FRENCH-INSPIRED fine dining restaurant Le Soufflé has found a new home at Fernando's at the Rockwell Leisure Club in Rockwell Center.

Le Soufflé at Fernando's offers a rich fusion of flavors. Its *carte du jour* features all-time favorites and new dishes.

Le Soufflé adds a new and exciting twist to Fernando's which has a reputation as an elegant yet cozy dining place.

Co-owner and chef, Jessie Sincioco said she wanted to create something different and distinctive for the Rockwell Club restaurant.

She said while most menu items are also available in other Le Soufflé outlets, Fernando's would offer items directly associated with the Club.

Aside from Le Soufflé's all-time favorite entrées, the Grilled Chilean Sea Bass and the Baked Rack of Lamb, chef Sincioco has created, among others, Alugbati Salad with arugula, Parmesan Flakes and crunchy prosciutto, and Pesto à la Jessie with prawns, scallops, salmon, sun-dried tomatoes, asparagus and Parmesan flakes. The Cheese, Spinach and Mushroom Souffle is a signature dish that remains quite in demand.

For desserts, the new branch offers French Chocolate Gâteau and the classic Mango Jubilee. The health-conscious can enjoy the rich Sugar-free Dark Chocolate Mousse.

Sincioco said she was also putting together dishes for those on the South Beach Diet, in response to numerous requests.

Sincioco was with the Hotel Inter-Continental for seven years before she opened the first Le Soufflé (with partner chefs William King and Andreas Katzer) in 1991.

The Rockwell Club's Le Soufflé at Fernando's welcomes non-members. Call 4502993 or 4502995.

Tips for buying canned products

ARGENTINA Corned Beef gives some safety tips when buying canned food products.

• Check for dents and leakages. Canned foods are vacuum sealed. The seal prevents air from getting into the product. Dents and leaks may indicate a breach in the vacuum seal and possible contamination that can cause food poisoning.

• Check expiry date. Although expiry dates are only recommendations on when it is best to consume a product, it is much safer to buy canned goods at least three months before their expiration.

• Select size suitable to your needs. Bigger-size cans may be cheaper but storing leftovers raises the possibility of contamination. It is better to get the size that can be consumed immediately.

• Store leftovers properly. Refrigerate or freeze uneaten canned foods immediately after a meal. Remove leftovers from the can and transfer to a covered container an hour or two after cooking. Leave enough airspace around containers for quick chilling. Throw away uneaten food if it has been kept too long or is a reheated leftover.

• Follow the first in, first out rule. Store newly purchased canned products at the back of the shelf and keep old ones in front. This way, you will use older products first. Canned food products usually maintain their quality for two years.

• Check quality of canned food. After it is opened, look at its appearance closely. Canned foods are usually safe to eat straight from the can as long as the container is intact. If you see any sign of spoilage, such as leaks, mold or bad odor, discard immediately. Not even pets should be allowed to eat them.

• Keep storage cabinets cool and dry. Canned foods should be stored away from warm places like hot pipes, ovens or ranges. Heat and moisture can cause rusting that may lead to leakage and spoilage.

Argentina Corned Beef received recently the Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) compliant certificate from the National Meat Inspection Service of the Department of Agriculture.

HACCP is the sanitary and safety standard adopted by the Food and Agriculture Organization and the World Health Organization, two agencies of the United Nations.

Argentina Corned Beef is manufactured by Pacific Meat Company Inc. (PMCI). Other PMCI products with the HACCP compliant certificates are Argentina Carne Norte, 555 Carne Norte and Lucky 7 Carne Norte.

Lenten season treats

THE REGGIE Aspiras School of Culinary Arts will teach exciting dishes for meatless days this Lenten season.

MARCH 11—Lenten Treats (all new): Whole Snapper in Charred Herbs, Barbecued Gindara in Miso Marinade, Dome Grilled Salmon with Sweet Mustard Sauce, Bacalao Vizcaina, Broiled Grouper with Garlic and Chilies, Arroz con Atun

March 12—Chicken Wings: The Ultimate Buffalo, Teriyaki, Ginger with Peanut Sauce, Sweet and Spicy, Chili, Garlic with Garlic Sauce, Honey and Soy, Maple Teriyaki; side dishes, drinks, dessert.

March 14—The Secrets of Famous Paella Restaurants of Spain Revealed (all new): Traditional Paella Valenciana, Paella con Pichon with (Pigeon), Paella de Bacalao, Arroz con Calamares Pequeños, Cebollas y Ajos (Baby Squid), Arroz de Pescado (Mixed Seafood)

March 16—Noodles (all new): Green Tea Duck Noodles, My Decadent Pancit Guisado, Adobong Pusit in Black Glass Noodles with Garlic Olive Oil, Sukiyaki Style, Dried Scallop Noodles, Stir-fried Noodles with Angus Beef and Mushrooms

Call 9289296, 9273008, 6335162, and 0917-8399888.

JAPAN'S electronics giant Sharp unveils the world's first "hot" refrigerator, "SJ-HV46J," at the company's showroom in Tokyo. The ref has a special space in the middle to keep meals hot for family members who dine separately. AFP

Muffins made sweetly, easily

JOHNLU Koa, founder and chief executive officer of French Baker, shares some tips on how to make muffins quickly and easily.

French Baker produces different varieties of muffins, which are no longer just breakfast or tea fare but also served as desserts for lunch or dinner.

Koa uses Bake Best baking powder for the muffins in such flavors as blueberry, peach, cinnamon nut, lemon poppy seed, mocha walnut, and orange almond, as well as the basic cheese and choco muffins, that are made in all 30 French Baker stores.

Koa says muffins are the simplest pastries to bake as they do not require the beating of egg yolks and whites like other cakes. Muffins simply rely on an effective double-acting baking powder like Bake Best to provide the chemical leavening effect.

With muffins, cake batter could expand three times its original volume, he says.

Bake Best is a double acting leavening agent that blends baking soda, sodium aluminum sulfate, calcium sulfate, monocalcium phosphate and the finest quality of wheat flour.

Bake Best releases carbon dioxide (CO_2) partially during mixing. The release of CO_2 is completed during the baking or steaming stage ensuring that the products have the finest grain and texture. Bake Best has a good balance of soda and acids for the largest volume, ideal color and satisfying taste for products like cakes, cookies, and steamed breads.

San Miguel Purefoods Flour Division developed this easy to follow muffin recipe.

Muffins Delight

1 ¾ c all-purpose flour
6 tbsp sugar
4 tsp Bake Best Baking Powder
1 tsp salt
1 pc eggs
13 tbsp fresh milk
5 ½ tbsp melted butter

Preheat oven to 200C/400F°. Grease muffin pans. Set aside.

Sift together the dry ingredients. Combine all liquid ingredients including melted butter.

Add the liquids to the dry ingredients and mix just until all the flour is moistened. The batter will look lumpy.

Fill muffin pans with batter mixture about 2/3 full.

Bake for 20-25 minutes.

Fruits and nuts can be added for extra flavor and variety.

Hot dinner from the ref

THE JAPANESE will soon have a refrigerator that can keep meals hot as well as cold.

Billed as a world first, the appliance, made by electronics firm Sharp, has a 20-liter (5.2 gallons) space in the middle—next to a box for ice cubes—that can be kept at 55 degrees Celsius (130 Fahrenheit).

It is scheduled to be launched in Japan tomorrow (March 11) and will sell for 238,000 yen ($2,270).

The new refrigerator was designed for households whose members have different meal times or who want hot food to be available when they want it.

Sharp said, with more people eating meals alone because of changing family lifestyles, the appliance can be used to keep dinner warm for anybody who has to eat late.

The warm space can automatically be switched to cooling mode with a pre-set timer, it added.

Total storage space comes to 455 liters (118 gallons) in the new refrigerator.

A Sharp survey showed 44 percent of Japanese households have dinner together only on weekends as office workers work later and children often study after school to prepare for exams. *AFP*

Chef says no to junk food at school

LONDON—Celebrity chef Jamie Oliver has launched a crusade against junk food served up in school canteens, forcing the government of Prime Minister Tony Blair to reassess Britain's nutritional standards.

The trendy, young cook, who shot to fame with a self-styled television cooking show, urged parents to: "start the revolution in the schools' dining halls."

Hoping to spread the word, he takes over a school canteen in Greenwich, south London, in a new television series on Channel Four called "Jamie's school dinners."

The floppy-haired 28-year-old, himself a father of two, is tasked with serving up healthy food at a low price and encouraging some 1,400 pupils to ditch the chips and hamburgers and tuck in.

"Twenty years ago, the government gave up responsibility for the nutrition and dealings with school dinners, and over 20 years the food went down, down, down to what we have now," said the baby-faced chef, who has also written a number of popular cook books and runs a London restaurant.

He bashed regular school dinner fodder of sausages, minced meat and fried fish accompanied with smiley-faced potatoes.

"When you deal with a lot of mince meat ... reconstituted, reshaped food, that's when things are added and you can't keep track of them," he said, blasting school menus for containing "too much salt, sugar, fat and additives."

Nutritionists agreed that a typical school meal contains "no fruit or vegetable, there is almost no Vitamin C which is important for immunity. The children are more likely to have infections and be away from school."

The food contains just one third of the iron that it should, which has an adverse affect on children's concentration and learning, they said.

Some 15 percent of children in Britain under the age of 11 suffer from obesity, according to Jamie Oliver's campaign—"Feed me better." The school dinner "is sometimes the only meal they have," he warned.

"At home they grab a snack in the fridge and go and eat it in front of their Playstation (console)." Despite his usual role, serving up mouth-watering dishes without a second thought to cost, Jamie has tried to whisk up healthy meals, such as Thai chicken curry and spinach pasta, while keeping to a tight budget of 37 pence ($0.7; 0.53 euros) per child—the amount offered by the government.

His campaign, which can be accessed on the web site www.feedmebetter.com, has published a manifesto and a petition that has already attracted more than 3,000 signatures.

In addition, Jamie has encouraged parents to visit their children's school to see for themselves what they are eating.

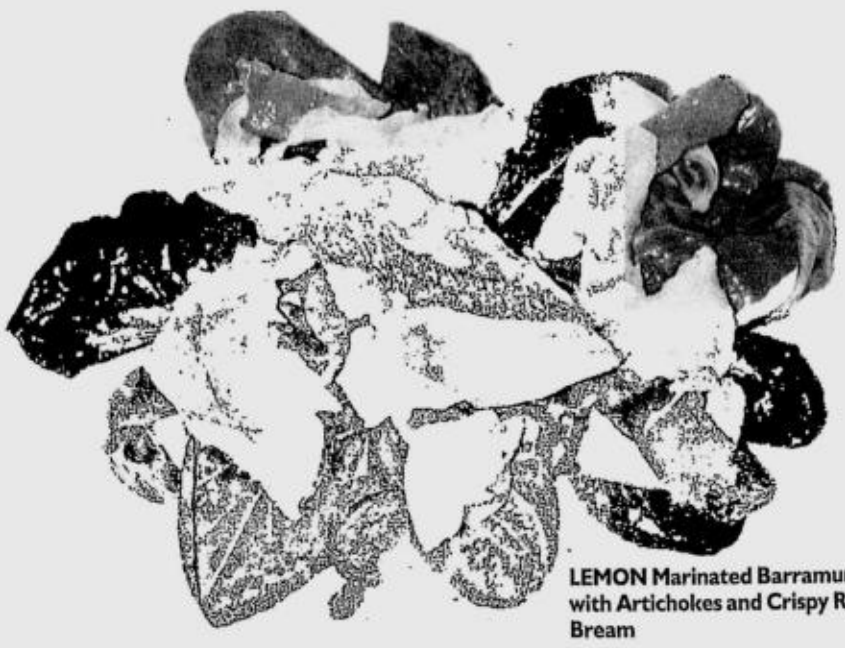
And he urged canteen staff to alert pupils to healthy items on the menu, calling on people to petition school heads and their local authorities.

The initiative only started recently, but results have already started to show.

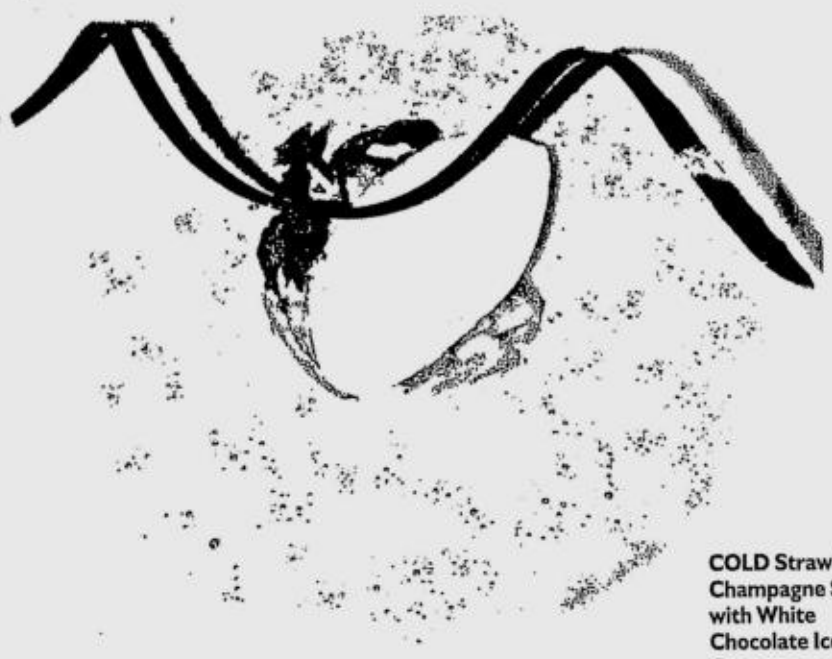
The local authorities in Greenwich have decided to raise the amount of money allocated to school meals to 50 pence per child. Furthermore, processed food has been taken off the menu in 25 schools in the borough and 55 others must follow suit by the end of the school year.

For her part, Britain's Education Minister Ruth Kelly has promised to introduce in September nationwide limits on salt, sugar and fat levels in processed foods used in canteens. *AFP*

Something old is new again, thanks to chef Tobi



LEMON Marinated Barramundi with Artichokes and Crispy Red Bream



COLD Strawberry Champagne Soup with White Chocolate Ice Cream

From page D1

garlic. Add milk and cream. Continue with Step 2.

Corn on the Cob

6 pcs, Japanese sweet corn, steamed
½ c maple syrup
¼ c butter, melted
3 garlic cloves, minced
1-2 tsp Tabasco, to taste
¼ tsp salt

Combine ingredients together, except corn. Warm corn in 350° pre-heated oven for 15 minutes basting with sauce.

Spanish terms 5

Guisantes—peas
Guiso—stew
Hierbas—herbs
Horno—oven
Huevos—eggs
Langosta—lobster
Langostino—prawn
Marinera—fisherman style
Membrillo—quince jam, jam eaten with cheese
Merluza—hake
Mero—grouper
Morcilla—blood sausage

Before I forget:

1. If you like burgers with black pepper and onions, you must try McDonald's Prosperity Burgers! Delicious!

2. A new baking and confectionery supply store, Sweet Craft, just opened. It sells everything from different types of flour, pans, chocolate etc. at 373 Boni Ave. Call 5321595 or 0917-6269901.

3. For all those asking me about what to serve on Good Friday, well, I'm doing my Favorite Recipes for Lent in class tomorrow, including Bacalao!

For comments or suggestions, text 0917-8399888

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1st Place (Visayas Regional Champion Team)
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School: OB Montessori Center, Inc.
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School: Philippine Women's College of Davao

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School: University of Regina Carmeli, Bulacan

4th Place (Mindanao Regional Champion)
School: Goldenstate College, General Santos

LIPTON MOCKTAIL MIXING COMPETITION

1st Place: (Mindanao Regional Champion)
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Special Award Received:
• The Caltex-LPG Sulit sa Bilis Serbisyo Award

2nd Place (NCR Regional Champion)
School: St. Scholastica's College, Manila

3rd Place (Luzon Regional Champion)
School: Lyceum of Batangas

4th Place (Visayas Regional Champion)
School: University of St. La Salle, Bacolod

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Arellano University

From mussels to rice

BAKED New Zealand Mussels—gratinated mussels on a half shell

CHICKEN Kebab Teriyaki—grilled skewered chunks of chicken with teriyaki sauce

THE CONGO Grill, Bar and Restaurant, first established in Quezon City four years ago by brothers Dominic and Kenneth Sytin and their friend chef Gilbert Garcia, serves almost 118 items that use high-quality, fresh ingredients and certified MSG free.

The restaurant, which has branches at Westgate Center, Filinvest, Alabang and SM Fairview, shares some of its popular recipes with readers.

Three-Way Baked New Zealand Mussels

9 pcs New Zealand mussels
3 tsp chopped garlic
2 tbsp grated cheese
1 tbsp caesar dressing
breading ingredients

Take three mussels from the shell and bread them by dredging in flour, dipping in egg and rolling in breadcrumbs.

Sprinkle garlic on the remaining mussels. Sprinkle cheese on three mussels.

Sprinkle Caesar dressing on the remaining three mussels. Deep-fry the breaded mussels. Bake the rest of the mussels.

Arrange on a platter and garnish before serving.

Chicken Teriyaki Kebab

¼ tsp garlic
1 tsp soy sauce
½ tsp liquid seasoning
½ tsp brown sugar
½ tsp calamansi juice
1 tsp clear softdrink
½ chicken, boneless and cubed
teriyaki sauce
salt and pepper

Combine ingredients, except chicken and teriyaki sauce.

Marinate the chicken in the mixture.

Put the chicken in a skewer with onions, bell pepper and tomato.

Grill until done. Arrange on a serving plate. Serve with teriyaki sauce on the side.

Crispy Pata

1 pc pork *pata* (front)
1 pc bay leaf
1 tsp black peppercorn
1 tbsp soy sauce
water for boiling
pata sauce

Put the *pata*, water, soy sauce, peppercorn and bay leaf in a pot. Bring to a boil. Lower the heat and simmer until tender. Let cool and chill in the refrigerator. Deep-fry until crispy.

Serve with *pata* sauce on the side as dip.

Congo Rice

1 tsp garlic
1 tbsp oil
2 tbsp chopped onion
3 c cooked rice
1 tbsp.squid ink
salt and pepper to taste

Saute the garlic in oil. Add the onions. Add the rice and cook for a minute. Add the squid ink. Season with salt and pepper. Serve with fried calamares, fried garlic and fried ginger on top.

CRISPY Pata—crispy-fried pork front leg

CONGO Rice—black squid ink rice

A chef's signature chicken recipes

AS CATERER extraordinaire, Jun Jun de Guzman has menus for all occasions.

After intensive training under instructors Mark and Maryanne Peregrine of the famous Cordon Bleu in London, Jun Jun went off to different restaurants abroad where he learned more of what is truly practical and efficient in the art of cookery. Then, he returned to Manila to start his catering business and even became personal chef for a movie star.

The chef recently graduated from an intensive chocolate training program from the Barry Callebaut Chocolate College. Today, he is part of the Supreme Consultancy Services alongside the country's top chefs Gene and Gino Gonzales.

Invited by Lea & Perrins Worcestershire Sauce to create signature fried chicken recipes, chef Jun Jun de Guzman shares these delightful chicken recipes with our readers, to enjoy with Lea & Perrins Catsup Dipping Sauce.

Lea & Perrins Worcestershire Sauce is another quality product from HP Foods Ltd. of the United Kingdom, makers of HP Barbeque, HP Sauce and HP Chili.

Turbo Barbecue Chicken

1-1¼ k whole chicken, cut into 12-14 pcs
2/3 c brown sugar
¾ c soy sauce
2/3 c banana catsup
1 ½ tbsp minced garlic
1 ½ tbsp Lea & Perrins Worcestershire Sauce
¼ c *calamansi* juice, about 8-9 pcs

Pat chicken dry with paper towel. Set aside. In a bowl, mix brown sugar, soy sauce, banana catsup, minced garlic, Lea & Perrins Worcestershire Sauce and *calamansi* juice. Stir well. Add chicken piece by piece, making sure that each piece is marinated well. Mix well. Cover and leave at room temperature for some time. Turbo bake at 350°F for 20-30 minutes.

Serve hot with the Lea & Perrins Catsup Dipping Sauce. To make this sauce, simply mix 2 tsp of Lea & Perrins Worcestershire sauce with half a cup of tomato or banana catsup.

Meanwhile, if you want a different chicken dip, add Lea & Perrins Worcestershire Sauce to catsup.

Mushroom Chicken Stew

¼ c cooking or vegetable oil
1 tbsp chopped garlic
1 pc onions, sliced, about ¾ cup
4 pcs dried shiitake mushroom
1 ¼-1 ½ k whole chicken, cut up into 12-14 pcs
1 ½ tbsp Lea & Perrins Worcestershire Sauce
1 ½ tbsp soy sauce
1 c water
1 pc chicken cube
2 tbsp all-purpose flour
1 can whole mushrooms, sliced
10 pcs whole black peppers
salt and pepper to taste

Refresh dried shiitake mushrooms in hot water. When soft, slice into strips. Set aside. Heat oil in a casserole. Sauté garlic and onions until light brown. Add shiitake strips. Cook for a short period. Add chicken pieces and render until fat appears. Season with salt and pepper. Add in Lea & Perrins Worcestershire Sauce, soy sauce, water, chicken cube. Mix and let boil. Add in flour and continue simmering until sauce becomes a bit thick. Season with salt and pepper. Add in sliced mushrooms and whole black peppers.

Serve while hot.

VINTAGE Chinese cuisine gets star treatment /E4

ARANETA Center has a wide array of food centers and restaurants to suit shoppers' varying tastes and preferences.

Late night dining destination

CIBO with owner/chef Gaita Fores

THERE'S a place in Quezon City that's fast regaining its reputation as an excellent place to enjoy a wide selection of great food, cozy ambiance and night entertainment—Araneta Center.

From the Shopwise Strip with its numerous fastfood joints to the quiet charm of the Coliseum Circle and the cosmopolitan ambiance of the newly opened Gateway Mall, Araneta Center has fully emerged as the most accessible place to satisfy your late-night cravings.

At the Gateway Mall, world-class casual dining and cozy cafés take you to a different level of gastronomic enjoyment. Whether you're in for some light snacks at night or a big scrumptious meal, the Gateway Mall never runs out of surprisingly delightful offerings.

Enjoy tacos at Taco Bell, which serves the tastiest burritos and nachos in town. Have a Tex-Mex meal with a free movie at Cineplex Gateway Mall courtesy of Taco Bell. For every P400 food purchase, customers get a free movie pass that may be redeemed at any Cineplex Gateway Mall cinema. The movie pass is valid for one screening. Promo tickets are available until March 24 and are valid until May 31.

For discriminating lovers of Italian food, Gateway Mall has Pizza Hut Bistro, Cibo and Italianni's. For those with a thing for unique American cuisine, Burgoo presents an endless selection of burgers, salads and more. For Chinese dishes, there's the newly opened Super Bowl of China. Of course, fans of Filipino food will forever flock to Max's for their fill of well-loved Pinoy dishes.

Along the periphery of the Coliseum Circle, the nocturnal food trip goes on: Dencio's for grilled treats, Rasa for Singaporean cuisine, Sachi for Japanese food, Gloria Maris for Chinese dishes, and Istanbul Express for Turkish and Mediterranean fare. Not to be missed is Café Bola, which boasts of noveau Pinoy cuisine.

But if you're still longing for the comfort of familiar places serving well-loved, tried-and-tested fares, Gateway Mall boasts of Manila's all-time favorite dining place, the trailblazing Café Adriatico and the equally popular bar, Café Havana.

For seafood and oysters flown fresh daily from the South, head to Oyster Boy at the Shopwise Strip.

OYSTER Boy

Good coffee and good company are the deal at Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf (Gateway Mall), Gloria Jeans (Shopwise Strip) and Starbucks (Coliseum Circle). And what's great coffee without donuts? Go Nuts Donuts at Coliseum Circle has been attracting a large and rabid set of patrons since it opened.

But if fastfood is your thing, the Shopwise Strip is the place to go. Outlets catering to different tastes and moods include Kentucky Fried Chicken, Wendy's, Subway, Red Ribbon, Bacolod Inasal Chicken, Pancit ng Taga Malabon, Ice Monster, Hotshots, Dimsum N' Dumplings and Nach-O-Fast.

Nightlife proves to be much more alive at the Araneta Center with Padi's Point and comedy bar Klownz. Araneta Center has also been coming up lately with superb musical events like the recent "A Passion for Jazz" featuring jazz sensations Mishka Adams, Skarlet and Isha.

Papunta pa lang, ang saya na!

Ngiting hanggang tenga, ngayon mo muling madarama.
Feeling ay ibang-iba, bagong-bago ang saya!

SuperFerry

happy trip ☺

Tawag na sa hotline: (02)528-7000 for Manila or (032)233-7000 for Cebu.

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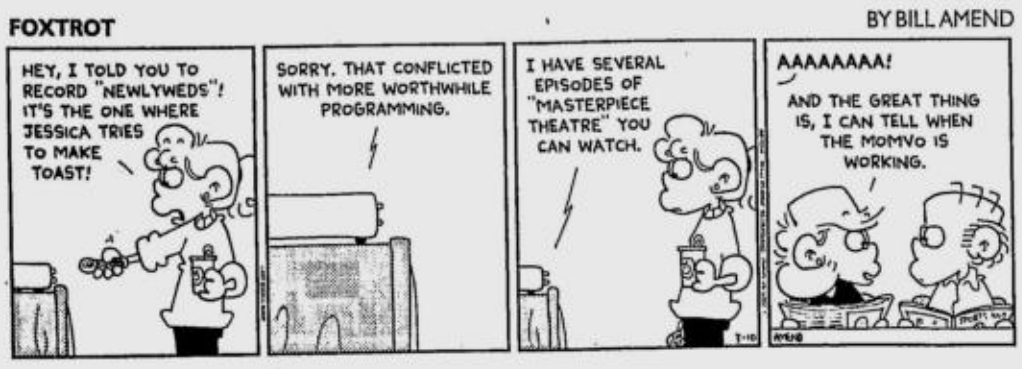
THURSDAY, MARCH 10, 2005

FOXTROT
BY BILL AMEND

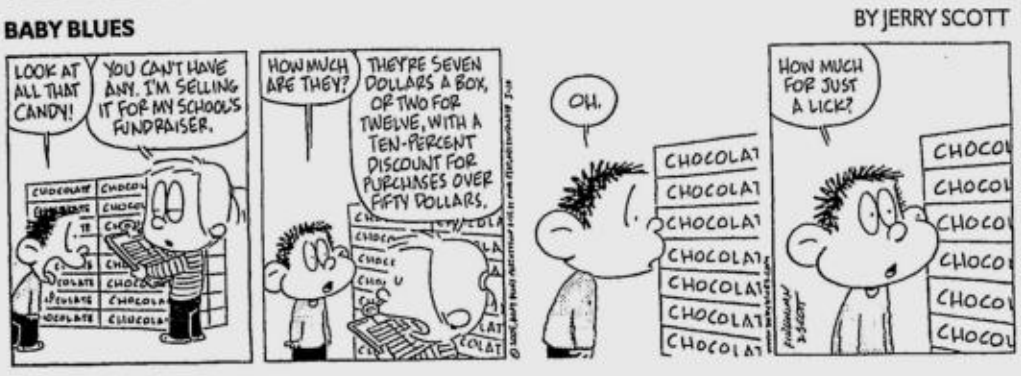


A. LIPIN
BY JESS ABRERA

MARVIN
BY TOM ARMSTRONG

PUGAD BABOY
BY P.M. JUNIOR

BABY BLUES
BY JERRY SCOTT



MUTTS
BY PATRICK McDONNELL

ATOMO AND WEBOY
BY LYRA GARCELLANO

DIVINE COMEDY
BY STEVEN PABALINAS

MIKROKOSMOS
BY JOMIKE TEJIDO

BEN
BY DANIEL SHELTON

KIKO MACHINE
BY MANIX ABRERA

LOVEKNOTS
BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO

TULDOK
BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING

Horoscope
BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: You're sensitive and empathetic. You practically hear people think. But you're easily hurt; therefore, you're gentle with others. You're nonmaterialistic because you are more concerned with your inner world. You love to have fun! You enjoy high drama and theatrics. The year ahead focuses on your closest relationships and partnerships. **Birthdate of:** Chuck Norris, actor; Edie Brickell, musician; Sharon Stone, actress.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): This is a good day to make long-range plans about real estate and family business. You want to secure your long-term future. You need a warm, cozy feeling in your tummy about this.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): Someone older or more experienced might offer you solid advice today. Quite possibly, you are the one offering advice to someone younger. Be alert for whatever comes your way.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): This is a good day to make practical decisions about your career path in life. You feel quite sensible about things.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): Trust your ideas about long-range travel plans. Ditto for plans related to publishing and the media. You have a realistic notion about what can be done, versus what is mere daydreaming.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): This is a good day to deal with red-tape matters connected with inheritances, insurance matters, shared property, debt and taxes. You want to clear up these things to feel better about your future.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): Sit down with a partner or close friend to make important decisions today. You're in a realistic frame of mind! Advice from someone more experienced might also be helpful.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): You're willing to work diligently and at a steady pace at anything you tackle today. You'll accomplish a lot at work! (You'll also impress your boss.)

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): This is a good day to discuss a sensible approach to sharing the responsibilities for children. You have the patience and perspective to come up with good decisions today.

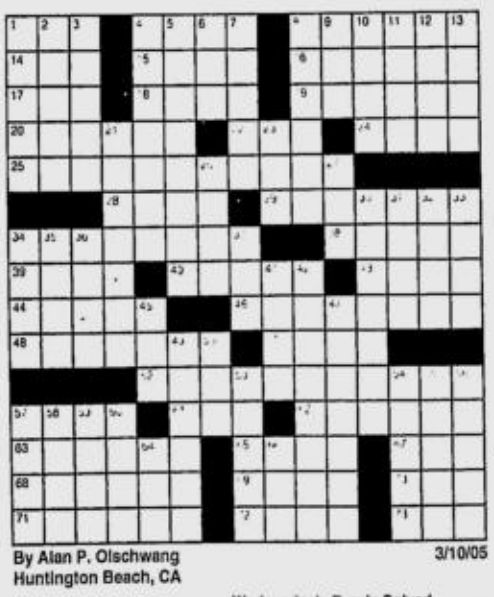
SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): Choose today to have discussions about family matters, parents and the shared responsibilities for anything connected with your domestic and private world. You're in a solid frame of mind.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): Don't hesitate to sign agreements or make negotiations today. Practical decisions look good. You see the future outcome of things. Listen to the advice of someone more experienced.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): Whatever you buy today will be practical and will probably last a long time. You're not in a frivolous frame of mind. You want to avoid waste.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): This is a good day to offer solid, sober, practical advice to children. You have the patience to teach them something. (Do it.)

Daily Crossword



By Alan P. Olschwang
Huntington Beach, CA
3/10/05

ACROSS
1 Current unit, for short
4 Beach toy
8 Shaken instrument
14 Buddy
15 Part of A.M.
16 Beneficial
17 Cool down
18 Astronauts' grp.
19 Start of Jerry Seinfeld quote
20 Biblical mount
22 Whirlpool tub
24 Extinct bird
25 Part 2 of quote
28 "..._ the twain shall meet"
29 Tiered bric-a-brac shelves
34 Mark Twain and Saki, e.g.
38 Villain's look
39 "The Time Machine" people
40 Part 3 of quote
43 Dental exam
44 Spud
46 Ear doctor's instrument
48 Audio equipment
51 With, in Arles
52 Part 4 of quote
57 Stench
61 Natl. interest watchdog
62 Frankie and Cleo
63 End of quote
65 Discomfort
67 Make lace
68 Picture holders
69 Otherwise
70 Mich. in Chicago, e.g.
71 Thoroughfare
72 Ceremony
73 Miles/hour connector

DOWN
1 Concerning bees
2 Spreadsheet user's shortcut
3 Guilty and not guilty
4 Cure-all
5 Vehement denunciation
6 Part of TGIF
7 Canine tether
8 "Teenage __ Ninja Turtles"
9 Hardwood tree
10 Marsh grass
11 '60s hairdo
12 Signaled
13 Too
21 More fluid
23 Pizza order
26 Vichy very
27 Xenon or neon
30 Italian dumplings
31 Architect Saarinen
32 Harvest
33 Perry's creator
34 Strokes
35 Israeli port
36 Observe
37 West Coast airport code
41 Provo's place
42 Fiction writer
45 Ump's cohort
47 Tennessee city
49 Where sporozoan zygotes develop
50 Indian honorific
53 Slim candle
54 Standing by
55 AWOL part
56 Aromatic compound
57 Switch positions
58 Filt
59 Sharif of film
60 Coating of ice
64 Spike or Peggy
66 The Greatest

Wednesday's Puzzle Solved

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3/10/05

5-star hotel fails to live up to expectations

THE CONSUMER

Marietta Velasco Giron

BAD trip right from the start was how I summed up the story sent to this column by *balikbayan* R. Cabrera (nycabrera@verizon.net) about his dinner with relatives at a restaurant in a five-star hotel in Makati.

These bits and pieces from his e-mail described his travails: "The unavailability of a table that we reserved, the lack of a steak knife, the slow and nerve-wracking pace of the service, the amateurish service."

He explained, "The appetizers and entrees took forever to arrive. My rib-eye steak was not grilled and seared around as I expected it to be. My wife's veal with sweetbread tasted like it was hurriedly thawed and then cooked... the two desserts were hastily assembled, with whipped cream, fruit preserve and some sliced mangoes on the side, priced P450 each."

That wasn't all. It took the waiter 10 minutes to tell the group that the wine they chose from the list was not available, and another 15 minutes for the replacement to be served.

Moreover, the waiter who brought the wine apparently did not know the proper way of doing it. Not only did the host have to ask him to pour the wine into the guests' glasses, but the waiter did not even let the host sample the wine first to make sure it was acceptable. This is the proper way of serving the wine in the best places—letting the host check the wine before it is poured.

"To be fair, our expectations were raised by the restaurant's high-end reputation among our friends in the Philippines (who also told us about the) relatively high prices of menu items. What was unfair was the bill automatically included a huge service charge that was definitely unwarranted and not deserved."

More complaints

Regular e-mail-sender Shelby Payne warns readers to stay clear of food delivery boys on motorbikes. If you get hit, he said, claiming for damage might be a long battle with the fast food operator.

He said he was sideswiped by a Shakey's delivery bike that was travelling on the sidewalk of Pasay Road near Don Bosco Church. The incident happened in August. To this day, neither Shakey's nor the delivery service provider have yet to respond to his demand for payment of damages.

He said he suffered slight injuries that prevented him from working for a few days. Moreover, his cellular phone was damaged.

"All of this is very scary because it shows that these motorcycle riders can drive like crazy and run people down. I wish the mayors of Metro Manila could really take strong action against drivers who flaunt the law and drive on the sidewalk," Payne wrote.

Shakey's told Mr. Payne they could not be held responsible for the accident as the delivery driver was employed by an agency called Excel Quality Inc.

For goodwill

But now we have news for Mr. Payne. He doesn't have to wait any longer because the delivery company will settle his claim anytime soon.

Gunther Torres, the company spokesperson, told us he would contact the claimant personally about arrangements.

"We are doing this because we want to preserve the goodwill that our company has (earned)," Torres explained. He added that the complaint was not resolved right away because there was no proof to substantiate the claims.

Exel Quality Inc. provides delivery service to several food chains.

Pizza meals and deals

We advise readers to write to Reiner S. of reinersee@gmail.com for information on which branch of a pizza chain to patronize or avoid, where to get the best deal for a pizza meal, etc. He is a regular customer of pizza chains in España, New York/Cubao, Banaue, Morato, and all the way to Tagaytay.

Ask him, for example, what branch to avoid because the pizza doesn't taste as good as the other outlets of his favorite chain. He found out that the cook used a different kind of oven that gave a different taste to the pizza.

He can tell you about a pizza house that served him a 10-inch order with a slice that was contaminated with a black fiber along the crust. According to him, the waiter simply took the slice away but did not bother to apologize or replace the pizza.

Ask him also which café has delivery boys who, at the end of their job, keep their work shoes in the food compartments of their bikes. He can also tell you which branch has rude delivery crew.

He has good words for Yellow Cab Pizza of Morato Branch. "It's clean. The security guard that evening of Feb. 24 was very polite when he asked me to move my car and apologized for interrupting our meal...."

Praises

"Wonderful customer service" was how e-mail sender Maria Munoz described the quick response of Jollibee-Greenbelt manager to her complaint. The manager apologized and replaced the wrong delivery within 20 minutes from the time Munoz complained.

New product wraps and seals

GLAD Press 'n Seal plastic film does not only cling but seal.

The first product of the joint venture among The Glad Products Company, The Clorox Company, and the Procter & Gamble Company, Glad Press 'n Seal is the first and only sealable plastic wrap that combines the many benefits of wraps and food storage.

The sealable wrap goes from refrigerator to freezer to microwave, making food preparation faster and simpler. Glad Press 'n Seal is so strong that, as cover for a container, it will not tear if you put anything on top of it.

The plastic sealer locks food odor in so other foods retain their own aroma.

Glad Press 'n Seal wrap can also be used as a spill-proof seal for a wide range of surfaces including plastic, glass, paper, Styrofoam, metal and wood.

It is cost-efficient as you will only use one layer for wrapping instead of the usual two or three layers of ordinary cling plastic. Leftovers can be packaged, frozen and microwaved using the same Glad Press 'n Seal wrap.

The product is available in supermarkets nationwide.

Win instant cash with milk purchase

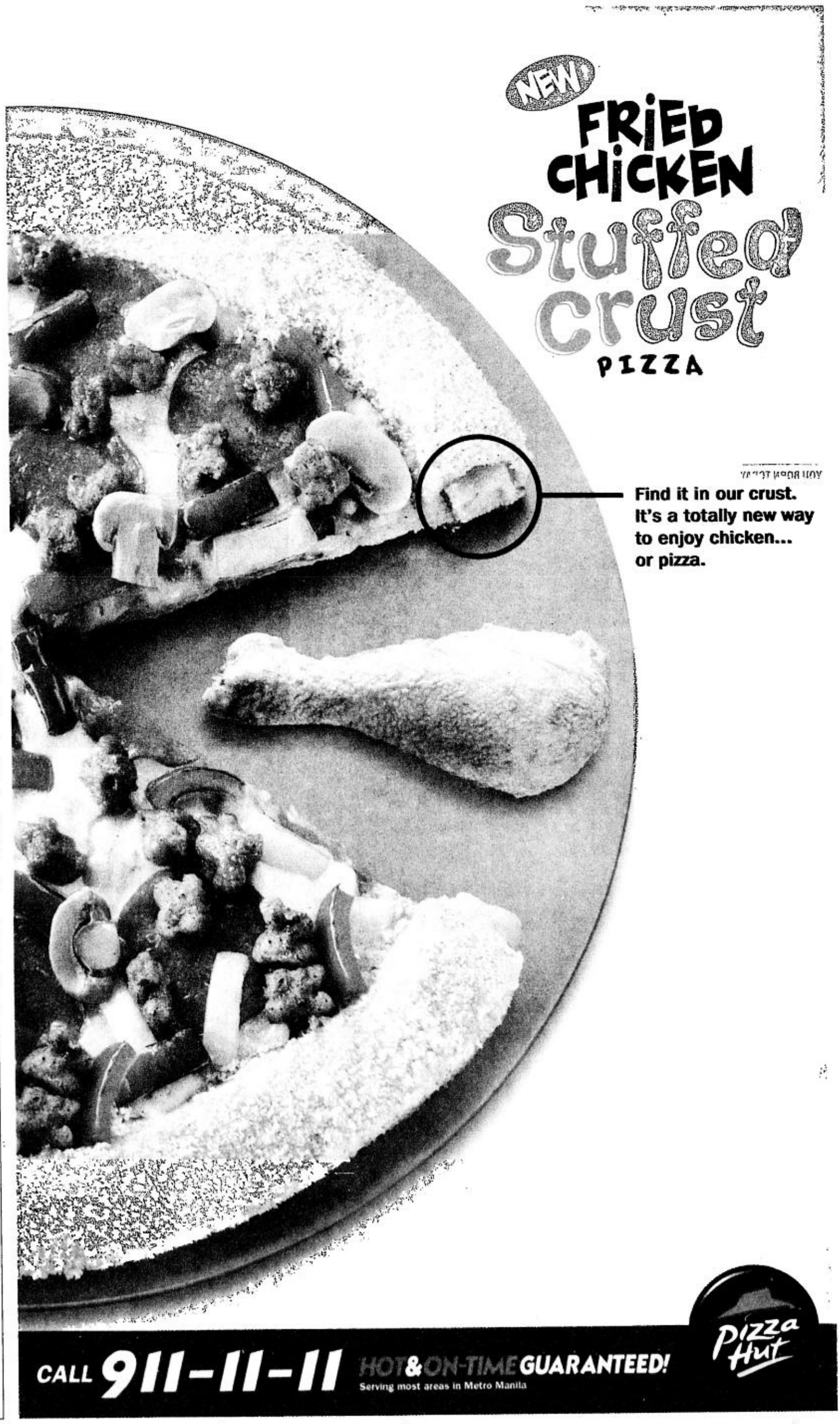
BUY Anchor 1+ milk at your favorite supermarket and get a chance to win instant cash.

If the Anchor 1+ Gotcha! Team spots you buying the milk, you can win prizes ranging from P200 for 165 g/180 g, P300 for 400 g, P400 for 1,000 g, and P500 for 1,800 g. Over P1 million in prizes is available.

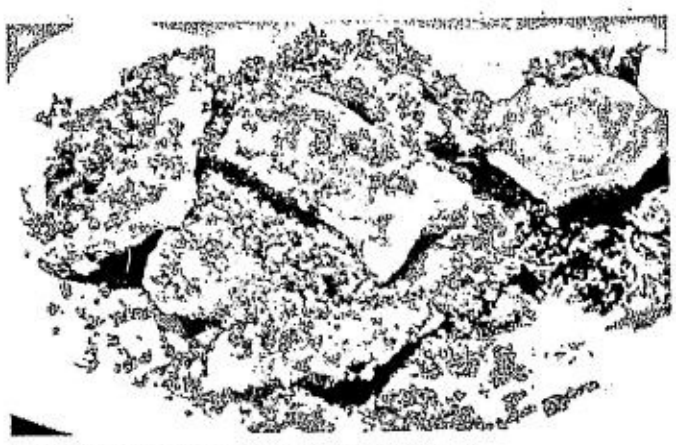
Tune in to your favorite radio station and watch out for announcements on when the team will visit your favorite supermarket.

The promo lasts until April 10.

Anchor 1+ is a growing up milk for children aged 1-4. It has Nutri-Care, a specific bundle of essential vitamins and minerals that will help protect against common childhood sickness. Anchor 1+ is available in vanilla and chocolate flavors.

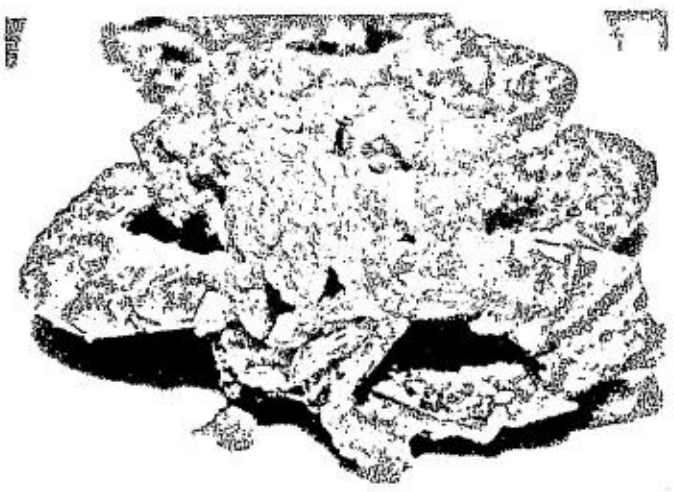


FISH Fillet with Taosi Sauce



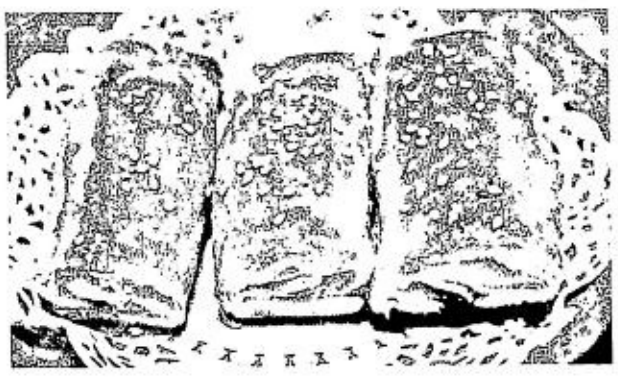
PAN-FRIED Codfish Flavoured with Spicy Garlic

SWEET and Sour Pork with Peach



SAUTÉED Prawns Dressed in Salted Egg Yolk

Mod takes on vintage Chinese cuisine



BBQ Pork Pastry

Text by Cesar Miguel G. Escaño
Contributor
Photos by Rudy Esperas

Whoever said Sweet and Sour Pork must always have pineapple has not dined at China Star

THE RICH geography of Chinese cooking invites exploration at the China Star restaurant where even frequent travelers to the Middle Kingdom will discover uncharted tastes.

Eugene Tan, one of the restaurant's owners, describes their "new vintage Chinese cuisine" as revisiting classic recipes and adding a modern twist. For example, China Star's version of sweet and sour pork (P168) uses peaches instead of the traditional pineapple chunks.

"We wanted to bring something fresh to the market," Tan says. "People familiar with Chinese cuisine will appreciate how we are trying to improve traditional recipes. At the same time, the younger crowd will be interested to try out Chinese cuisine with a different, unique taste."

Fusion cuisine involves marrying Western and Eastern elements. New vintage Chinese cuisine takes a different approach by updating traditional recipes for the modern palate. By combining techniques and ingredients from different regions, the cuisine creates harmony in food. Sautéed Prawns Dressed in Salted Egg Yolk (P238) is a dish that marries two distinct Chinese cuisines. Sauteed prawns are a staple in Cantonese cooking while salted eggs are common in Shanghai cuisine.

"Chinese cooking alone has so much to offer," says Tan. "Our menu highlights the many food varieties throughout the regions."

Regional diversity

The geography of Chinese cuisine can be divided into four major regions: the cold northern plains; the fertile east; the southern coast; and the mountainous west.

The northern region of China includes Beijing and reaches into the hostile climate of Mongolia. As rice is hard to cultivate in the cold weather, bread and wheat noodles are the staple companions to every meal. Mutton and lamb take the place of pork as many residents of the region are Muslim. Wanton and Beef Brisket in Noodle Soup (P118) is one of the region's contributions to the menu.

Eastern China is called the land of fish and rice. The Yangtze River waters the rice-producing lowlands of the East. Fish are abundant along the coast. Mixed Seafood with Beancurd on Rice (P148) embodies the typical qualities of Eastern Chinese cooking, which are freshness, smoothness and tenderness.

EUGENE Tan

CURRY Chicken Baked Rice

One of China Star's two signature dishes, Taiwanese Marinated Pork in Beggar Pot (P188 for small serving and P298 for large serving) originated in the eastern city of Suzhou. Taiwanese chefs innovated on the recipe by removing the salted fish and highlighting the sweet sauce. The dish is made by slow-roasting prime cuts of pork for four to five hours. The roasting process infuses the pork with a honeyed flavor. The texture is similar to Lechon Paksiw but the meat is far softer. The pork is topped with a gleaming layer of fat and submerged in sweet sauce. Diners often order Ham Soy Kok or Port Puff (P50) to accompany the dish. They either dip the fluffy bread in the sauce or stuff the pork into the bread's core in siopao fashion.

The dish proved to be so popular that China Star introduced a small version (P188), which serves one to two persons. The large version (P298) serves three to four persons.

Canton, located in the Guangdong Province, takes advantage of the southern coast's lush resources. Cantonese cooking relies less on frying and loud sauces and more on natural flavors. Chicken with Ginger in Pot (P158) illustrates this philosophy. The ginger adds to the natural flavor of the cooked chicken. Other variants include Chicken with Liver in Pot (P158) and Chicken with Taro in Pot (P158).

Spicy and sour dishes abound in mountainous Western China where residents have developed a liking for the locally-grown chili. Mapo Tofu (P128) is a popular dish from the Sichuan province. It combines tofu and meat cooked in a moderately spicy sauce.

Hong Kong chef

China Star has imported Hong Kong-born chef Yu Siu Kung to lay down the foundation for the new vintage Chinese cuisine. The chef has incorporated curry, an Indian import, to HK cuisine and has come up with Curry Chicken Baked Rice (P148). The chicken covered in mustard yellow sauce sits on a bed of white rice. Baking enhances the smell of curry.

China Star's other signature dish is Pan-fried Codfish Flavoured in Spicy Garlic (P298). The codfish, imported from HK, is pan-fried rather than grilled, as is true of most other Asian codfish recipes. Pan-frying seals the meat's delicate flavor. Spicy Garlic adds a zing to each fork-full. For best results, dip the meat in vinegar before covering it in spicy garlic.

"We plan to update the menu at least twice a year," says Tan.

At 80-plus dishes and counting—the restaurant has no trouble coming up with a Star Dish for the Month.

"We've come full circle with China Star. Other Chinese restaurants are foreign franchises. Now, China Star is ready to franchise."

China Star is located at the G/F The Podium in Ortigas Center (tels. 9149988/9148899); G/F Market! Market!, Bonifacio Global City, Taguig (tels. 8866810 and 8866811); UPG/F Corte de las Palmas, Alabang Town Center, Muntinlupa City (tel. 8071188).

PODIUM branch in Ortigas Center is one of three branches of China Star, which is now ready to franchise.